KSGU Volume 5

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in Volume 5

福井晴敏（ふくい・はるとし）

1968年、東京都墨田区生まれ。1998年に『Twelve Y.O.』で第44回江戸川乱歩賞を受賞し作家デビュー。『亡国のイージス』『終戦のローレライ』『Op.ローズダスト』など著書、映画化作品多数。現在、月刊ガンダムエース誌上にて本作『機動戦士ガンダムUC』を連載中。

COVER DESIGN
akihito sumiyoshi + fake graphics

Kadokawa Comics A
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福井晴敏

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《ユニコーン》が新たに示した『ラプラスの箱』へと至る座標は、
宇宙世紀元年に爆破された首相官邸〈ラプラス〉の史跡であった。
探査のため、エコーズ隊長・ダグザと共に、再び《ユニコーン》に乗り込むバナージ。
その背後にはフル・フロンタルたち『袖付き』の影が迫っていた。
因縁が収束する宇宙世紀開闢の地で、バナージを待ち受ける「亡霊」とは？
そして地球に降り立ったリディとミネバの運命は――？
ガンダムサーガ最新作、宇宙編に決着をつける第5弾！

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

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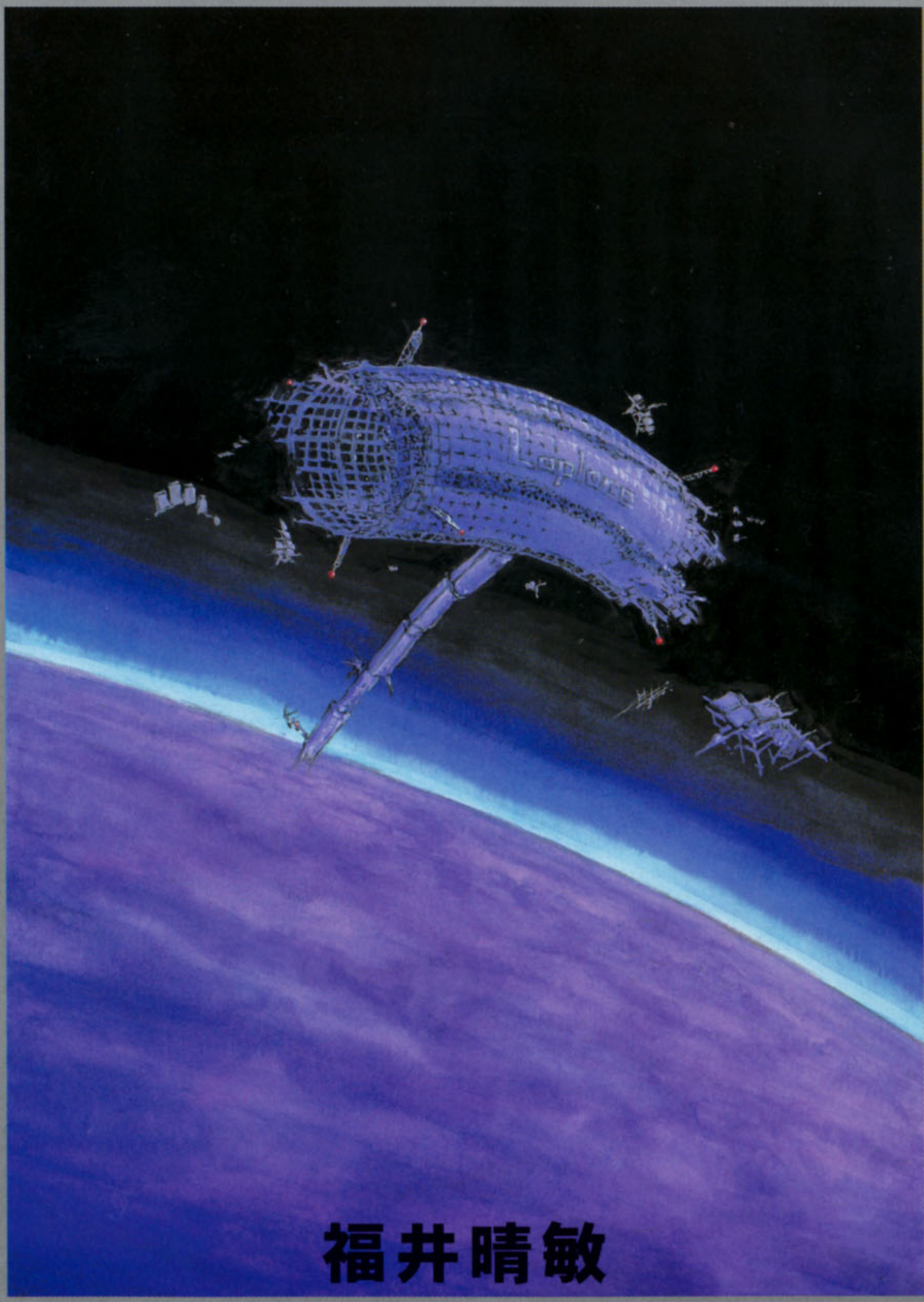
機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

5 ラプラスの亡霊



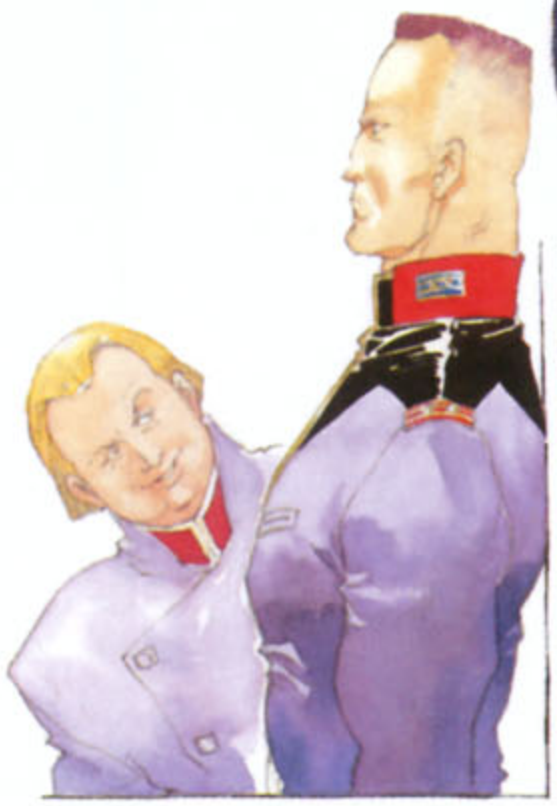
福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季　挿絵 虎哉孝征

Previous to GUNDAM UC
前巻までのあらすじ

宇宙世紀0096年、宇宙移民者の独立を掲げたジオン公国と、地球連邦政府の戦争も終結して久しく、地球圏には束の間の平和が訪れたかに見えた。しかしその裏では、連邦政府がその開放を何より恐れると言われる『ラプラスの箱』をめぐり、『袖付き』と仇名されるネオ・ジオン軍残党、地球連邦政府、そしてビスト財団という三者の思惑が複雑に交錯していた。

工業コロニー〈インダストリアル7〉に住む少年バナージ・リンクスは、ネオ・ジオンの要人、ミネバ・ラオ・ザビを助けたことから、『ラプラスの箱』をめぐる争乱に巻き込まれる。生き別れの父であったカーディアス・ビストから『ラプラスの箱』への



道標とされるMS《ユニコーン》を託され、連邦軍の強襲揚陸艦《ネェル・アーガマ》に収容されるバナージ。コロニー離脱後も、ミネバを守るために追っ手と戦うが、『袖付き』の首魁フル・フロンタルに敗れ、その拠点である資源衛星〈パラオ〉に捕らわれてしまうのだった。

《ユニコーン》を奪還すべく、《ネェル・アーガマ》は〈パラオ〉へ の奇襲を敢行する。その混乱の中でバナージは〈パラオ〉を《ユニコーン》で脱出。さらにミネバを地球へ逃そうとするリディ・マーセナスの背中を守ってみせる。しかし強化人間マリーダ・クルスが操るMS《クシャトリヤ》との戦闘の最中、《ユニコーン》はその隠された能力を発現させ、バナージの意志を無視してニュータイプを狩る殺戮マシーンと化す。マリーダとの交感を経て、なんとか機体のコントロールを取り戻すバナージであったが、その胸中には《ユニコーン》への疑心と恐れが生まれていた。

イラスト／安彦良和、虎哉孝征

Chapter 1

Part 1

The confetti continued to dance in the air like snow. The fragments that covered the sky were scattered over, mixing together with the cheers of the people, forming a vortex. This vortex rose up due to the wind currents of the artificial airflow, and the multi-colored powder of light swayed as it rose up the colony's sky.

Right, left, right, left. Suberoa Zinnerman recited as he marched at the same pace as his breathing, darting his eyes as he tried to look at the crowd that was moving by. There were young children holding military flags and old people with their backs arched, looking like soldiers who returned to their hometown. A woman poked her head out from amidst the human wall, waving a handkerchief, and she was probably looking for her lover amongst the squad that came back. Zinnerman immediately looked around to check that there were no stupid soldiers who would wave back at the woman.

There were no radicals that could be seen messing up the formations' proceedings. All the soldiers wore metal helmets that covered their ears and necks and their secondary combat uniform. They were equipped with rifles that worked under gravity, slung on their shoulders, and they turned their tense expressions before. Right, left, right left. Zinnerman saw that they did not mess up in their marching, and secretly felt relieved that the special training was taking effect. The newly gathered recruits formed more than

half their ranks, and old experienced officers like Zinnerman had always been guiding the actions of these rookies, training them until they could attend a parade, whether it was in the past, or at this point. He finally managed to train them to a decent level, including the newly-appointed squad leaders who had brand new officer-use mantles on them. Feeling satisfied, Zinnerman looked over at the other end where the formation was, the large building located at the end of the avenue.

The Chancellor Government Building, which thoroughly displayed the splendor of capital of the Principality of Zeon "Zum City", was a large building that had 3 sharp towers on the tip of the chalice-like structure, built in a complicated planar structure, and it looked like an angry man's face when seen from the front. *To think that I would be marveling at this Zeonism cultural promotion at its finest, the government office where Chancellor Degwin Zabi lives in.* Zinnerman never thought that this day would calm, and as he secretly tried to suppress the agitation as he was about to laugh out, he continued to divert his eyes onto both sides of the avenue. The confetti continued to fall like snow, and the brick houses that were built in the style of European streets were lined side by side with each other, and the banners that were dropped down from the windows had large handwritten words on them. There were words like "Beat the Earth Federation Government!" "Let the Principality of Zeon gain real independence!". There was a satirical image of a Federation soldier hanging onto Earth on a banner with the words "Save our national patriots!", and on it, there was an illustration of a mobile suit that looked like a "Zack" point its machine gun at them.

Save our national patriots, huh? That doesn't sound bad. Zinnerman thought. It had been more than 20 years since he, a gruff person of no education and charisma, joined the Principality of Zeon Defense force. For a man like him, who would have ended up as a mob member if he did not do this, those overbearing words would be tough to live up to. This place was changed into a Principality after Zeon Deikun died, and as drastic things happened, including the growth of the national army, they had to withstand the financial sanctions from the Federation government. Even though the hopes of colony self-government they betted on were trampled on, even though they endured oppression after oppression, even though the days of hibernation would continue—this day would be a glorious day for these people who were already prepared to live their lives like this.

It was January 3rd, Universal Century 0079. The fuse signaling Zeon's war for independence was lit when Operation British started at a lightning-quick speed. The Sides that were allied with the Federation were crushed, and Earth took a severe hit due to the colony drops. *It will be our turn next; the mission entrusted to us will be to bear the fate of the Principality and fight into enemy ranks. What other stage allows old-timers like us to perform when we offer no advantage besides our determination?*

"It has been a month since the war started. With every soldier's rigorous pro-activeness, our Zeon Principality had finally suppressed the Earth Federation government as we hoped. But we still have to win this tough battle if we want the Federation to succumb, and for us to fulfill the ideals of our founding father Zeon Deikun."

Supreme Commander Gihren Zabi said as he faced the thousands of soldiers located at the plaza in front of the Government Building. Zinnerman could not even see the live broadcast on the large television screens, let alone see him talk on the stage. He pricked his ears to listen to the loud baritone, stared at the wall of spectators waving their right hands, and looked for the petite figure of his wife, who should be here to send him off.

With the help of the squadron leader, a close friend, all officers' families would have special treatment, so there was no reason for her to be behind the human wall. His wife, Fee, who had been supporting him for many years through, and his lone daughter, Marie, who he finally got the chance to meet after a long time, were supposed to be there. *Where are they—?*

"There was a saying that this one month war caused half the human population to die off. Because of this, many theories have slandered us, the Principality of Zeon, as mass murderers that humanity had never seen before. But is that really true? About 100 years ago, humanity, which had worn out Earth to its limits, found a new lease of lease by sending the overflowing populace into space. This itself is a good thing, and it is worth mentioning as an accomplishment for human civilization. But in the long history natural ecosystem, only humanity continued to grow in size. Is this not a blasphemy against naturalism? Humanity followed its own desires without reflecting, and the results of pushing our living sphere into space is that we created a group of privileged people that controls Earth. They created an inapt government that created the laws that would protect the Federation, and believed that they could control space from Earth. They even carried out used the term 'absolute democracy' to cover the fact that they're a bureaucracy, and even used the

resources obtained from space to develop Earth. This act itself is foolishness even as compared to a reversal of priorities!

Now is the time for humanity to look at itself again. As part of the natural ecosystem, we should remain humble to nature, to Earth. If we consider this viewpoint, can't we view 5 billion people's deaths as atonement that humanity should do to nature? If that's the case, the responsibility given to us is a huge one. With countless sacrifices as our basis, we have been given the responsibility to create a new management system that allows humanity to live on forever."

Found them. Zinnerman saw the familiar faces from amidst the faces in the human wall that were the size of beans, and swallowed his voice that was about to come out from his throat. Fee, who was wearing a new coat she bought for this day, had put in effort to doll herself up as she smiled. Perhaps she noticed him here? Marie, who just passed her fifth birthday, was held in her mother's hands, and it seemed like she was waving a military flag at him. *Those plump and soft arms…!*

"To all officers and soldiers gathered here, you have the honor of leading the invasion on Earth. Basically everyone has no experience of standing on Earth, and we have never seen the light of Earth for ourselves . I suppose that everyone will not be at peace, as we're about to enter an unknown world, enemy territory.

But I hope that you do not forget about the founding ambition of Zeon. Do not forget what Zeon Deikun said, that the humans who come to space will revolutionized. This Side 3 on the back of the Moon is furthest from Earth, and amongst the people that were released into space, we're the

*lowest level of **Spacenoids**. But because of that, we can become an outstanding race that can manage the next generation of Earth. We're the chosen people who can view humanity objectively through the depths of space."*

The baritone increased in intensity, and the air that was concealed within "Zum City" rumbled. *Is that the usual most outstanding humanity survival he's good at again? No need to go about with those extra reasons, just tell us to win the battle for our country and for our families, right?* Zinnerman grumbled somewhat unhappily in his heart as he continued to glance aside at his wife, and as expected, they noticed him. He could see that Marie was throwing a tantrum, wanting to get to her father. *It'll be great if I can go over there to carry her—*

"Everyone, we are not invaders. We are descending on Earth to educate people and liberate them from the weak and corrupted hands of the Federation. As long as we, the superior ones, are the ones managing, humanity can approach a real utopia. Sieg Zeon!"

The cheers rained down at this moment, and several hundred thousand people's passionate cheers rocked the entire colony. Sieg Zeon, Sieg Zeon. Zinnerman, who got caught in the passionate cheers as he raised his hands, suddenly felt uneasy as he felt concerned about his wife. He could not see the faces of Fee's group as they were covered by the numerous fists. The crowd that was riled up emotionally by Gihren were only concerned about getting engrossed in his words, creating a riot that gradually swallowed his wife and daughter.

CALM DOWN, YOU PEOPLE! THERE'S A KID HERE! Zinnerman felt a chill from the rumbling and howling crowd as he only cared about looking for Fee and Marie's faces. Confetti continued to fall like snow, and the shouts of 'Sieg Zeon' continued to rumble. Fee was pushed by the crowd that wanted to head to the front, and her unsteady body appeared at the edge before disappearing from amongst the coats of the crowd.

Zinnerman resisted the urge to break ranks and get to them as he reached his neck out to look for them. He could vaguely see Marie crying from amidst the human wall, and the military flag she was holding was dropped onto the avenue, trampled by some unknown person—

Part 2

The noise of the emergency call easily broke through the membrane of his sleep. As his fingers automatically pressed on the panel button, Zinnerman let out a hoarse "What is it?" as he undid the fastener of his sleeping bag completely.

"We've caught sight of an allied unit's identification signal. The guess is that it's the guest you mentioned."

"I'll go over right away."

Zinnerman did not look at Gilboa Sant on the monitor as he cut the ship's communication. He rubbed his oily face, rose up from

the sleeping bag and let his body float towards the door. He grabbed the leather jumper that was floating in the air and glanced at the mirror at the side of the door.

During these ten years, his hairline had receded back completely, and his face became loose and limp. The current image of this tired man in his fifties was of complete contrast with the old him as Zinnerman looked back at the back in doubt, wondering in his heart who in the world this person was.

The cheers of the people became a pipe dream, and a body that was like a remnant was looking at the mirror in this utterly cold captain's room. Zinnerman heard the sounds of his dream dissipating, and estimated the time that passed ever since that day. *17 years—well, I'm already so old, and yet this is enough time for someone to change what's happening in the world, is it not?* Zinnerman gave a bitter smile as he thought about how he could still live on to this time. This man's country and family was broken, and he, who had nothing else to continue living for, may had viewed the revival of Zeon as a wish he was banking on, but he never believed anything deep within, and he never felt that he could get back anything like this. This man was glancing at the world where everything to him was erased, and was just living aimlessly.

No—even if it were a hundred years, there were some things that could not be erased. The faces of his wife and daughter Zinnerman saw in his dreams blew aside the bitter smile in his chest. Zinnerman heard of the end of the war in a detention barrack, and on that day, when he returned to his homeland that was called Principality of Zeon, when he saw that his homeland became a 'public toilet' of hungry soldiers who offered themselves

to the Federation, Zinnerman decided that he would continue fighting until he died. The end point called victory never existed, and he continued to fight in order not to lose his mind, in order to stuff the deep valley that was opened within his heart, the crack leading to an endless hell—he knew that he was already crazy psychologically, and he knew that he could not fill that crack no matter what he did.

"Sieg Zeon, huh…"

The aftereffects of the dream caused the utterly cold air to waver slightly before fading away. *To heck with your Sieg Zeon!* Zinnerman stamped on the floor and left the captain room that was a dreary sight to him.

Part 3

At this point, they were 150,000km away from the shoal space region of L1, and the light of the Earth shining through the bridge window looked as large as a basketball. That mobile suit left the disposable booster board it used and slowly closed in on the " Garencieres".

As its name suggested, the board-shaped booster board with laser rocket engines installed on both left and right sides was abandoned behind, and the giant with a flat head on the back. It was the RMS-119 "Eye-Zack". The machine that had its own sleeve features lit the balance burners, negating the inertia from the booster board as it gradually matched the relative velocity of the " Garencieres". The hatch at the back of the ship was opened, and the sliding-type cargo hangar was opened for about 30 seconds.

The “Eye-Zack” drew a direct trajectory as it interacted with the hangar, and the extended restraints of the supporting frame held the machine.

Once the hangar took the machine in, air immediately flowed into the mechanical deck. Zinnerman waited for the alert light ‘Air’ to change from red to green before entering the mechanical deck. Due the long and narrow triangular shaped ship frame of the “ Garencieres”, there was a long and narrow hollow on the front and back side of the mechanical hangar—or rather, above and below. There were 3 “Geara Zulus” docked with their backs facing each other at the tail end of the ship, the base of the triangular prism. Normally, there would be a “Kshatriya” occupying the upper level deck at the front of the ship, but at this point, there was no sight of the larger than average machine. The one replacing the “Kshatriya ” at that place was the grey-colored “Eye-Zack” that did not seem to have any place to stand properly as it took up three mobile suits ’ worth of space.

“Is it the old-fashioned EWAC?”

“This is a machine of little significance that’s here just to make up the numbers after we evacuated from “Palau”. They probably won’t feel any pity even if it were sent here.”

Flaste Schole, who was accompanying, said with a tone of disagreement. Zinnerman passed through the wide upper deck as he glanced aside at the “Eye-Zack” that had been used for a long time. The deck crew and the mechanics were already on it, and the normal suits with the logo mark Rivacona Cargo” on them were floating around the deck. They did prepare a set of book data for a

cargo ship as disguise, like route certificates and cargo catalogs, but they could not guarantee that they could pass through the absolute defense line leading easily by sending data information to the patrol later. If a patrol ship met them on their way, the plan would be for this group of people to line up on the upper deck and give smiling faces at the mobile suits that would arrive on the ship for inspection.

Normally, they could sneak through about 8-9 times out of 10, but the recent commotion forced security measures to be tightened , and it would not be easy to slip by the Federation army with their tense eyes. Zinnerman landed on the deck on both feet, reached his hands at his neck and looked up at the giant body of the " Eye-Zack". *What exactly is the 'guest' that approached us at this time planning?* Zinnerman was not given much time to think as the cockpit cover located at the machine's abdomen was opened. Looking from afar, he could see a tall figure in the pilot suit appearing from behind the hatch.

That person pushed aside the mechanic that was intending to approach him and descended towards Zinnerman. His face could not be seen as it was covered by the helmet visor, but he remembered that demeanor that showed no openings. The man did not look away from Zinnerman at all as he stopped on the deck 3m about away before reaching for his helmet.

"I'm Gael Chan. I'll be in your care for a while."

The bald man took off his helmet as he showed a fearless look. There was no mistake about it; he was the follower who accompanied Cardeas Vist when Zinnerman met them on "

Industrial 7", and also the watchdog of the Vist Foundation. Both of them, who once pointed guns at each other, exchanged looks, and at this point, Zinnerman could still identify blazing antagonistic intent from the other party. He cautiously asked back, "I suppose I won't have to introduce myself, do I?"

"Why would a confidante of the Vist Foundation like you be at such a place?'

The "Rewloola" only notified them about the guest's name and history, but did not tell them about why Gael visited them. Gael's sharp stare glanced at Flaste, who put his hand on the pistol on his waist, and then turned right back at Zinnerman "This has nothing to do with the Foundation" and said with an emotionless expression.

"On a side note, there is nothing about my arrival here that is related to anyone here. There is a debt I have to deal with some people on the "Nahel Argama". If I want to approach that place, I will have to borrow the power of the "Sleeves"."

The eyes that showed no signs of wavering looked like there were black burns on the white eyeballs. *This guy is the same as me—he's unable to release his emotions and lost all other choices in life.* Zinnerman felt his hardened chest shuddering as he asked, "So you're trying to take revenge for your master?", and Gael's eyes remained unmoved as he answered with silence.

"So you'll even use your enemies to achieve your goals…it's not a trendy thing to do this nowadays."

"Whatever you say. To me, Cardeas Vist isn't just someone I'm indebted to, its because he's my master. if that were the case, who would want to ride on this mobile suit that's filled with the stench of Zeon?"

Gael's words probably were not just directed at the "Eye-Zack" that was similar to the Principality's "Zack" exterior. *To this man who survived the One Year War as a Federation soldier, people like us may be descendants of the demon that forced half the human race to die to him.* Zinnerman used his hand to suppress the rising killing intent, and Flaste, who wanted to step forward unceremoniously, "You're not going to build friendships with us? Fine by us." relaxed his lips as he said.

"But since you're on this ship, you'll have to listen to me. Everything that happened in "Industrial 7" will not be mentioned until both of us achieve our aims. Is that fine with you?"

"I understand that it was an accident." Gael continued without breaking his stiff expression, "I'm intending to settle this debt with someone else, and besides, I haven't snapped your necks here, so please trust me."

As this person stood while not caring about the antagonistic intent around him, there was bleak and gloom on the back of this person who had no place to return to. *He might be a god of death that may bring disaster to this ship—but that's fine. If we're going to raise trouble against the largest army in history, why don't we call in a death god too?* Zinnerman lowered his face that was letting out a chortle, and ordered a deck crew member nearby, "Bring him to the room. I'll listen to any words he wants to say later."

Gael let the crew member accompany him as he stepped on the floor and left the scene gradually. “What’s with that bastard…” Flaste would not turn his heinous stare away from the back of the other party as he said this, but Zinnerman said, “Don’t mind.”

“Since he introduced himself to be from Anaheim, even Frontal can’t just leave him alone. Besides, that man will be useful at a certain moment, since he’s someone who understands the workings within Anaheim.”

The Federation army intruded at the venue of the dealing, and Cardeas Vist died amidst the chaos. Now that they recalled it, it was not hard to imagine that it was a family dispute that happened over the “Laplace Box”. There was definitely something going on between Cardeas, who wanted to break the deadlock in the world through the opening of the “Box”, and someone else, who used his assassination to protect the Vist Foundation and gain the benefits—Zinnerman turned his back on Flaste, who finally understood as he frowned, and looked back at the “Eye-Zack” that was standing there.

“That machine is way too pitiful to be left here as a replacement for the “Kshatriya”. We have to bring the “Kshatriya” and the princess back together soon…”

Our aim isn’t just this after all. Zinnerman did not exchange looks with Flaste, who nodded his head silently, and nudged his stiff beard on his jaw. He suddenly felt an emotion that made it hard for him to breathe and stepped on the floor.

He rejected all human things he could get in order not to lose, but this body of his was trembling because he realized how important the people he lost were. The empty container deck overlapped the hole in his heart, and he could not move due to an overwhelming chill. *I'm a lost cause here*, Zinnerman mocked himself in his heart as he left the deck that did not have Marida's machine.

Part 4

The light that rose up from beside the feet was so bright that even the anti-glare filter could not negate it completely. The pink incandescence light continued to swirl in a vortex, and a halation appeared on the all-view monitor as the plasma surrounding the machine continued to let out terrifying cracking sounds.

The speed of descent was more devastating than expected. The worry that the machine would burn up at any moment and the fear of being devoured by the heat wave struck her. Mineva Lao Zabi continued to be rattled by the shockwaves striking the cockpit as she stared at the monitor that was heating up as her tense body continued to be pressed down on the assistance seat. The incandescence light was formed by the thin air that was converted into plasma, and not the burning of the machine itself; however, the surface temperature was already past 1,500 degrees Celsius and rising. The frictional heat from the atmosphere and the aerodynamic heating caused by adiabatic compression caused the "Delta Plus" to be burned by the unavoidable heat as it descended into the atmosphere. As the name Waverider implied, the aerial

fighting machine that was burned red as it rode on the plasma wave was gradually gliding down this large and thick atmosphere.

It was approximately 2 hours ago from the moment the machine broke through the absolute defense line and got detected by the patrolling Federation warships. The "Delta Plus", which was deemed to be a 'ghost' that died off in battle, appeared, stopped, went through endless questioning that was repeated, and ended up choosing to shake off the pursuers and move forward. The machine made use the rebounding effect of the atmosphere to enter low orbit as it entered the atmosphere through the polar track covering the axis of the north and south poles. It was unknown whether the 'family' Riddhe mentioned about used its power as the intercepting satellites did not take action, but it did not matter to the "Delta Plus" that entered the atmosphere from the south pole.

One would know that this layer that surrounded the blue planet like soap bubbles was a scorching hot endless wilderness the moment they ended. Once they rushed into the atmosphere, they could only leave the machine's controls to the electronic navigation system and wait for the moment they leave the burning hell. The " Delta Plus" frame that was pulled by gravity was heating up as it broke through the atmospheric wall at a speed of Mach 20. If one believed in the inertial navigation device capabilities to calculate the current location through speed, time and machine movement, the current height at this point would be 70km. it had been more than 10 minutes since they entered the atmosphere. They were entering safely at a more gradual angle to reduce the resistance, but did this really take that much time? The incandescence light became red hot light without warning, and the machine that went

from the thermosphere into the mesosphere started to be covered by heat as Mineva glanced at the face of the man sitting on the linear seat beside her.

Riddhe Marcenas, who was holding onto the control stick tightly, had his tense face covered by red hot light here. It was probably the first time that he entered the atmosphere in a unit alone without hoping for any data link from the mothership or ground control. Mineva recalled how she used to observe the burning atmosphere from the small window when she rode on a shuttle into the atmosphere in the past. She would also imagine herself riding on the shuttle as she glided through the atmosphere through the visuals obtained from the observation satellites that could still receive visual feed as she descended. *Leaving a white scratch in the transparent atmosphere and creating a shockwave trajectory that's 1/3 the circumference of the planet—that was really beautiful.* Mineva felt that she, who was born in space and could logically view planets and colonies equally, was instantly absorbed by the established Nature at that moment. *I wonder if this "Delta Plus" is carving out a similar trajectory?* She turned her neck that was originally frozen in fear and looked at the roof through the normal suit visor.

The machine that was protected by anti-heat functions was feeling the frictional heat from below, and the rear top side of the all-view monitor was not covered by the red hot light. The thin atmosphere that looked distorted by the shockwaves went from pitch black into thick indigo, and after that, the vacuum that turned navy blue swayed as the sharp starry light continued to flicker as they faded fast.

Space became sky—The moment Mineva inadvertently said that, the red hot light at her feet decreased drastically, and what replaced it was a strong light that shone in from the right side on her.

Riddhe pulled the control stick, and the activation sounds of the rear wings was mixed together with the tremors. The main wings endured the thick atmosphere, and the G-force that struck back leaped on the machine that decelerated out of a sudden. The " Delta Plus" moved through the stratosphere as it switched into manual mode. Mineva felt the force pushing her forward hard, but she continued to look at the source of the light that was shining into the cockpit.

The light of the sun was there. It was not an extremely hot celestial body that was seen in space, but a friendly light that was apt for a day. *It's the bright warm light that passes through the atmosphere and graces all living things below it…!*

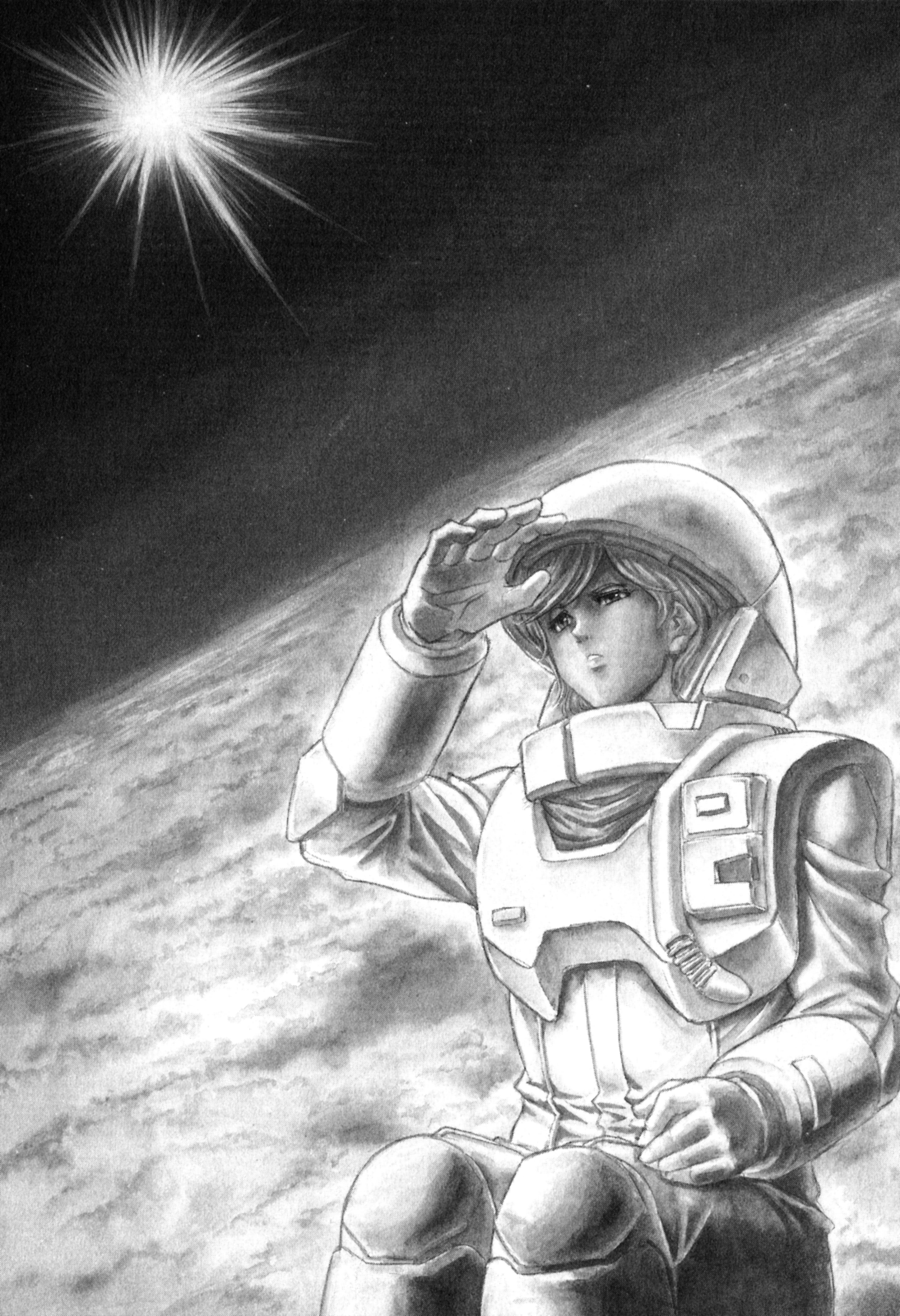
The overly bright light caused Mineva to reach her hand out to block it as she turned her stare to the front. As the blue sky showed absolutely no traces of clouds, the white patterns of the altostratus clouds could be seen floating at her feet. The sea should be further below at where the plains of light below the intertwining clouds floating around were. *Our estimated course is that we'll be above the Caribbean Sea, so is this the place?* Mineva inadvertently opened her helmet visor and stared at the sea that was dazzling as it reflected sunlight.

She could not see the waves rising and falling from the stratospheric height they were at, and the sea was like a

transparent blue glass panel that covered the surface of the planet. The long and wide arc that marked the horizon was lying further down, and the two layers, the sky and seas showed the contours of the Earth. *What a color, what a magnificent expanse!* Mineva could not tell what sort of situation she was in as she faced the world that expanded in front of her on the all-view monitor. She felt the blood in her body moving to her buttocks, but she did not feel uneasy about it. She knew that her body cells were being active, reclaiming the sense of balance humans originally had. She understood and recognized real gravity, and her body was radiating heat because she was shuddering in delight rising from deep within.

The place where all life was born, and the place where all life returns to ; this is—

"Welcome to Earth."



Riddhe said as he smiled slightly, the same scenery was being reflected off his brown eyes. The voice that was not heard for a long time was half negated by the roaring of the fusion core jet rocket engines, and the rumbling air flow covered the cockpit. Everything and anything was rich, noisy, and unlike space, where time stood still, everything here was bustling. Light, wind, sounds, everything was changing at the moment. She could not hear her own breathing as she got engrossed in the breath of the Earth, and stared at the horizon that was on the other end.

The Shock Cone surrounding the machine expanded gradually as it merged itself within the blue sky. The "Delta Plus" that had decelerated to Mach 2 slowed down further and let the worn out scorching hot machine descend to the troposphere. The North American continent did not care too much about the invaders that came barging in from space as it expanded in front of their eyes, basked in the gentle light of morning.

Part 5

The phone rang. The crisp and clear bell sound of the antique phone echoed off the tall living room ceiling, caused the decorations on the chandelier to tremble slightly, and landed on the Alanveil-styled hard wood floor.

A pair of thoroughly polished leather shoes walked past that floor silently. Douglas Dwiyon remained unhurried, elegant but quick as he crossed the living room in a gliding-like manner, just as how he instructed the servants strictly usually, as he went right at the corridor where the telephone table was. He used his

fingertips to wipe away the dust lying on the Bergère chair, glanced aside at the Monet scenery painting, and walked towards the corridor. This butler clad in black clothes basked under the morning sunlight that shone in through the glass panel of the terrace as he crossed the middle-aged styled solemn-looking furniture. Dwiyon himself could be seen as one of the antiques too, and in fact, his overemphasis attitude and his old age had earned him the nickname of an Antique amongst the maids and the cooks, but he himself was not overly concerned by it.

Every family member had a phone in this room, but Dwiyon would be in charge of picking up this call that was made with the help of a namecard. No matter who that person was, he must not be complacent as he would be giving the first impression of this family. Dwiyon tidied his bow tie with his hands and cleared his voice, "Yes?" and let out let out an attentive yet sophisticated-sounding voice that was hard to catch up with into the phone.

The old butler had been serving this household for more than 30 years, and he had already mixed in the flair of the family into his voice, but it was still not that overwhelming to the other party. The sound that came from the phone was a commotion that was of a completely different dimension from this famed family that was based in Southern USA.

(Hello, this is the Cheyenne Anti-air Command branch of the Federation Air Force. I'm the Duty Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Dickson Meyer, and based on emergency protocols, I'm contacting with regards to relevant issues. May I know if Chairman Ronan Marcenas is here?"

The wall clock indicated 9am at this moment. DONG. DONG, and the bell chimed at this moment, resonating together with the voice on the phone. Dwiyon's hand that was taking notes shuddered.

Part 6

The polished leather shoes let out hurried footstep sounds as they rushed up the stairs. Dwiyon did not finish his timekeeping as he arrived at the roundabout at the middle of the stairs, leaving behind the maids who were shocked as they moved aside, climbed up the second level, and carried his forward momentum into the office within.

Dwiyon did not have time to even breath at the door like usual as he knocked on the wooden door. "Excuse me!" he did not wait for the reply as he opened the door. The office was linked to the study, and inside this office, the first secretary, who was facing the master of the household turned around with a doubtful look on his face.

"What is it, Dwiyon? Why are you panicking?"

The first secretary was the son-in-law of the master in this household. Normally, Dwiyon would not forget to greet him, but this was not the time to do this. he took out a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his sweat, and spoke,

"Sir, the military gave us an emergency call saying that young master Riddhe…"

Dwiyon could not explain this earth-shattering situation with only a single line. The first secretary widened his mouth and blinked as he face this old butler, who swallowed the words he was about to continue with as his shoulders went up and down together with his panting. With his back facing the window, the owner of this house was sitting at the office table, his hands on the table tensing up as he looked back at Dwiyon's face.

"What is it about Riddhe?"

Ronan Marcenas merely said this. The tea-colored eyes bore backlight as his face naturally overlapped with the master's son who had not returned home for many years—Riddhe Marcenas. This time, Dwiyon really could not say anything.

Part 7

"A new mission…?"

After all that? Alberto swallowed the voice that was about rise out from his throat as he gave a doubtful look back at the monitor in front of him again. Martha Vist Carbine's eyes suddenly narrowed (Any questions?) as her icy cold voice echoed through the second communication room of the "Nahel Argama".

"No, it's not that there're any problems…but the "Nahel Argama" is rather worn out after some battles. I'm wondering if we can get some other squads here as well—"

(I just want them to investigate the space region coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program's information. You will be

heading through that place when you return to “Luna II” anyway, so there would not be much additional work for you, am I right?)

Martha said nonchalantly as she used her long fingers to pick up the fluff on her shoulders. Alberto looked like he was rendered silent by that finger as he went silent.

(We owe the Senate Council a favor for what happened at “ Palau”. The “Unicorn” can’t be delivered to the Moon in that case, so we should at least let them help out in some ways. And according to the feedback from the technicians here, it seems that it ’s very difficult to remove the pilot’s biological identification register.)

The “Unicorn” was reclaimed after maintenance, and they found data from the machine that seemed to indicate the coordinates of the “Box”. It was just yesterday that Martha heard of how things developed in this communication room. Because of this, Martha’s plan was to make use of the “Unicorn” when it was still useful, let the military investigate the coordinated space and keep all findings to themselves, so she most probably left some avenues out there. Of course, if she could find the “Box” there, she would have most likely planned a way for the Foundation to strike first.

In terms of political sense, this thinking was definitely valid since the Vist Foundation could not keep the “Unicorn Gundam” itself. The indicated coordinates was definitely on the return path to “Luna II”, and when considering the uniqueness of the location, there was very little chance of Neo Zeon attacking them. This definitely was a mission the “Nahel Argama” could still do as it

struggled to survive, but the premise was that this plan was to be viewed this way by outsiders. As someone directly involved in this , Alberto could not agree with this, and his stare landed on the floor of the dim communication room.

After nearly dying a few times, the crew was finally on the path back to the docks, so how much would they be looking forward to landing? The tough battle of "Palau" ended 2 days ago, and Alberto and the crew passed through moments of pain and exhilaration. It would be really cruel to push the mission to them and delay their arrival back at the docks…

(You look like you went through life and death with them and developed emotions with them.)

He looked away for several seconds, and Martha read his thoughts as she spoke up. Alberto felt his heart being grabbed as he looked at the face on the monitor.

(This isn't like you at all. You're probably tired. When you arrive back on Earth, rest well for a while.)

"Me, to Earth…?"

To Alberto, who was mentally prepared that he would be observed to investigate the situation, these were unexpected words . Martha curled her lips that were covered with lipstick to the side slightly and continued, "I got a launcher shuttle from the Foundation.)

(I want you to take that Cyber-Newtype to Augusta on North America.)

"Augusta? Don't tell me—"

(Right, it's that Augusta. The Newtype research facilities are already sealed off, but I heard that the facilities for *readjustments* are still there.)

Alberto felt a chill up his spine. The Augusta Research Institute was one of the largest Newtype research facilities together with the Murasame Research Lab. However, this Newtype Research was only in name, as they once worked together with the military to develop human weapons. He would be bringing the female pilot of the "Sleeves" to the human research plant which would dissect war orphans—

"What are you planning to do?"

(If the commotion continues like this, our options of dealing with the media will be extremely limited. The Senate Council seems like it wants to keep its distance from the Foundaiton, so we have to hurry up and reassemble the UC plan Cardeas wrecked to appease the army. We'll also use this chance to calm those guys trying to get the "Box", so we definitely must make good of this.)

"Complete the UC project…the second unit?"

Alberto could not make any other guesses. There was another RX-0 being moved to Earth, being experimented on under gravity

conditions. They had to hurry up, complete it, and use this to show the military superiority of the Vist Foundation and Anaheim Electronics. The fact was that there was a collusion between the UC plan contractors and the inner government council trying to take back the "Box", so the proceeding of the plan would allow them to hold this collusion off. If they could control the situation well, they could probably return the "Box" back to its original owner.

(This UC plan views the reassembly of the space forces as a cover up to eradicate Zeon completely…it sounds like a fantasy the conservatives' brains would think of at a moment of inspiration, but there is a high chance that it might be affected greatly due to the dissolvement of the Principality of Zeon. The Foundation and Anaheim must have the "Box" in order to weather this storm, and I can't stand someone opening the "Box" due to a man's romance like what Cardeas did.)

It was rare to see Martha show her emotions when she talked as she put her hand on her wavy hair. She obviously looked anxious, and Alberto cringed as he looked away from the monitor, but Martha was right to say this, and he said this to convince himself. *Cardeas is the culprit behind everything who plotted with the overload and reached his hand on a 100 year taboo. He left his real successor aside and left the "Box"s key to the kid he had from his mistress. There's no reason that this kind of person is to bear the Foundation's future, so I—*

(I wouldn't have to use this move if grandfather could simply tell me where the "Box" is. Well, we can be considered lucky to get a Cyber-Newtype. Make sure all preparations are done when transporting her.)

At that moment, Martha erased all her emotions as she put on the usual iron-mask face. Alberto could not digest anything as he looked up and answered, “Yes.”

“But I don’t know if the Captain and the rest will believe me or not…”

(Most of those were killed in action by that Cyber-Newtype’s mobile suit, right? Just say that you considered the crew’s feelings and that there are unspeakable things. Besides, the Senate Council will be sending them a message to.)

It’s not that kind of problem, but that some people who can only carry out top down orders can’t take back the “Unicorn”. The feelings Alberto once hid showed themselves on the face again, and he turned his eyes towards the monitor again. (I’ll meet up with you too.) Martha remained unmoved as her lips formed a smile.

“You’re coming too…?”

(The Moon’s gravity is good for beauty, but it’s bad for the body and mind. I’ll head over to the Caribbean once I’m done with work . The weather’s fine now anyway.)

It was a radiant smile. It never changed at all, just like how it was when his childish eyes looked up at her many years ago—no, it was a ‘woman’s smile, one more beautiful than before over time. This woman understood everything, from the feelings of the “ Nahel Argama” crew to the psychology required to talk to them at the right moments, and she was manipulating others like chess

pieces on a board. Even though she understood, she did not pull forcefully, but set a direction for people to follow, and this was an attribute of a leader…*is that so?* a sudden chill suddenly blew by Alberto's heart as he lowered his silent face.

Where do I intend to go after this? Do I have no way back? Alberto looked at the hand that could not shake off the feeling when he squeezed the trigger as he thought, (Oh yes.) Martha seemed to recall something she forgot as she called out.

(That man who used to be Cardeas' secretary, he's called Gael, right? It seems that he's missing.)

Alberto was prompted by the beating in his heart as he looked up.

(There are signs that he used some trade routes Anaheim has to interact with the "Sleeves". Perhaps he's trying to take revenge for his dead master.)

Martha's lips showed a smirk, and she looked like a demon that was looking down at the soul in her hand.

(It is true that the kind of master would determine the kind of subordinate…be careful. Both you and I are on a path of no return.)

Martha used these words to lay a curse. The soul was restrained in the hand, and Martha stared at Alberto while giving him a look

not to be complacent. Alberto felt the detesting feeling that was budding in him collapse completely as he softly answered, “Yes… ” and cut the communication link with “Von Braun” on the moon.

The satisfied look Martha gave as she narrowed her eyes disappeared, and the thicker darkness that filled the communication room surrounded him. Alberto felt a chill as he suspected that someone was hiding within. *Is it that man who bore Cardeas' grudge? Is he someone who intend to bare his fangs on my neck in this darkness*— Alberto left the console, unlocked the door and arrived on the corridor outside. He ignored the stares of his subordinates standing outside the door as he grabbed the lift grip leading to the bridge.

Alberto tidied his tie and took in the air filled with paint fumes into his cold lungs. He was slowly getting used to the air in the bridge, but it could not be helped. No one here would speak up for him, and no one would help him. The only place of solace he had was the clutches of the demon that was looking at the world from the Moon, the only moment where he could relax. Alberto became an associate of Anaheim Electronics everyone hated as he went to the bridge. The darkness that followed him showed no signs of fading, and he felt the temperature rising up his body that was moving in zero gravity.

Part 8

The thick green machine looked like it was scrapped as it sat on the floor, unable to be stored on the hangars that were available, and to those who were already used to seeing the eyes of the

Federation units, this scene caused pure surprise. The 4 moveable binders were hanging from the shoulders, and if any one of them was taken away, the volume would be equivalent to that of an ordinary mobile suit. The only term that could describe this humanoid-shaped machine that could move the binders on its own freely and display exceeding mobility would be 'Heavyweight'.

"The NZ-666 "Kshatriya". From the model number itself, we can determine that this is an original mobile suit created by Neo Zeon. They did install a Psycoframe around the cockpit, but it's an old model. They probably used the test materials provided from Anaheim during "Char's Counterattack"."

Aaron Terzieff put his hands on the twisted cockpit hatch as he looked inside the cockpit, saying this. He was someone related to the UC plan detained from "Industrial 7", and he was an important witness under ECOAS' management at this point, but there was no better choice than him to analyze the unknown Psycommu machine that was detained on the ship. Otto Mitas used his Captain's authority to borrow Aaron for the time being as he stood on the catwalk built at the side of the mechanic deck, staring at the "Kshatriya"—the 4-winged that belonged to the " Sleeves" and took down lots of ships and units—and observing it.

There was also the Romeo 010 "ReZEL" on this mechanic deck that could be considered a ship's factory, and the other crew members were exchanging its missing arm. In contrast , the " Kshatriya" did have its limbs intact, but the total damage was worse than the Romeo 010. The sub-arms that were hidden inside the binders were melted from the back, and the conducting fluids continued to leak out from several parts of the machine at this

point. The front end of the sleeve that melted and solidified lost the right hand it should have. The armor that had many curves was dented severely because of the heat and the impact, reminiscent of a thoroughly abused human. *That "Gundam" did all that?* Otto swallowed as he recalled the white mobile suit that was undergoing repairs on the mobile suit deck and asked the person beside him, "You once said that only "Granada" on the Moon has Psycommu production facilities, right?" Aaron lifted his head that was originally poking inside the cockpit hatch, and answered,

"Yes. The "Unicorn"s Psycoframe was also developed by the Anaheim factory on "Granada". As it was announced that this technology was terminated, we did everything there considering the secrecy of the work."

"Why was it suddenly stopped?"

"I heard that it was because it ventured into too many unknown territories. Besides, it is made by man, and the electronics system can be explained through system reasoning. However, let's take for example the moment the "Unicorn" activates its NT-D system. It looks like the psycoframe revealed from under is glowing, right? Even we, the manufacturers, have no idea why it's glowing either. "

The ECOAS member who was supervising Aaron from behind showed a surprised expression too. "You don't know either?"

"The psycommu receives the psycowaves from the pilot and amplifies it—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, resonate . What we can be certain is that the psyco chips, each the size of a

metal particle and molded into the frame, would react to it, but we just have no idea why it's glowing. The glow pattern would also vary according to the person riding on it. Anyway, this seems like it's a phenomenon that happens when the psycowaves overloads the system, but the electric voltage of the psycommu would not increase because of this, and we have no idea what's the relationship between the psycowave level and the glow patterns. The key itself is still human thought waves, and this thing called consciousness itself can't be analyzed through data alone.

"If that psyco chip is the size of a particle, won't it glow when it reacts with the psycowaves and vibrate?"

"Stop joking here. If that were the case, we wouldn't have used it on the movable frame at all. It's nonsense to have a weapon that' s glowing and tells the enemy your location here."

Aaron said with a rather angry tone, and Otto could only shut his mouth of an amateur.

"The overloaded electricity would cause the electric cords to become red, right? It seems that the theory behind it is the same, but it's not just giving off heat. It looks like it's giving off light, and its light properties can be recorded, but this light isn't just emitted through electric output. I hate to say this as a technician, but this is an unknown light. And also, it can be become a source of physical energy…"

At that moment, Aaron's words stopped unnaturally as he looked away to an unspecified area. "Source of energy?" Otto, who glanced over to ask back, looked at the expression the supervising

ECOAS member was giving, “Have you seen the “Unicorn”s battle records?” and rounded off.

“Yeah…”

“I didn’t see it myself, but I can roughly guess how it went from the damage this thing suffered. It was probably an overwhelmingly one-sided battle, right? Even if the assistance of the NT-D, the power it showed was abnormal. This is far different from the specifications we originally envisioned. It’s making us scared for no reason.”

Aaron looked at the half-trashed “Kshatriya” and frowned at it in a psychotic manner. His expression erased any plans Otto had of trying to change the topic. It was really an abnormal battle. *What kind of expression will Aaron show if he learns that the pilot of the “ Unicorn” is a student who’s still a novice at this?* Otto could not give a wry smile at this even though he wanted to, and his lowered stare turned around because of another voice that called him from behind “Captain.”

“There’s contact from the infirmary. The prisoner’s awake now. ”

Liam Borrinea grabbed onto the handrail to negate the inertia, let her feet land on the floor, and handed the clinical records to Otto. Otto looked back at the meaningful stare his vice-officer was giving, turned his back on Aaron, who continued to inspect the machine, and looked down at the clinical records.

"Leaving aside her external wounds, it seems that she's rather frail now. I don't think she's in a state to last through an interrogation."

"…What's with all the scalds and scars written on this?"

There were records of numerous scars and burns on the human diagnostics outline drawn on the clinical records. The attached photos graphically showed old scars on the thighs and the cleavage. It was impossible to imagine those as injuries incurred from riding a mobile suit. Liam looked aside, "Many perverts probably used her so some toy." and said with disgust.

"According to doctor Hassan, her female functions are already wrecked."

This really caused Otto to be silent. Liam did not look at Otto, who inadvertently looked up, as she glared at the floor with a furious expression.

"I heard that a Newtype squad full of clones was sent into battle at the end of the First Neo Zeon war. They should have been wiped out already—"

"So there was someone who survived, but ended up like this, huh…"

"Maybe she got picked up by some savage human trader. It's said that when Cyber-Newtypes lose the people giving them instructions, they will become puppets with broken strings. Most likely, she didn't even know anything when…"

Liam grabbed onto the handrail and swallowed the words she was about to say next. She showed the pain and unhappiness only a woman would understand, and her wide shoulders looked rather bewitching to Otto at this point. He did not know how old Marida Cruz, the pilot of this "Kshatriya" was at this point, but from her looks, it was impossible that she would be above 20. In that case, she would be around 10 when she took part in the First Neo Zeon war—it would be too serious to describe her as simply a war casualty, a term that could be thrown randomly. He closed the clinical records and sighed out from within.

"This technology has no responsibility over the outcome, but it' s like it was born to destroy humanity according to demands and interests. I really can't deny that this is a vice of humanity. There's no saving us here."

Liam muttered, and Aaron could be seen investigating the " Kshatriya" right in front of her. The technician forgot about the terrifying words he said a minute ago that came out of nowhere, and only cared about tinkering with the toy he got. His engrossed expression caused Otto to sigh just when he thought he went out of breath. "Leave the questioning of the prisoner to the Senate Council", he said as he returned the clinical records to Liam.

"We do want information on the "Sleeves", but we won't be able to think of anything in our tired states. Let's just return back to the port at "Luna II" first."

It had been 40 hours since they left the shoal space region in L1. On estimate, the "Nahel Argama" seemed like it was already halfway through the return path back to "Luna II" as it gradually approached the Earth's geostationary orbit. At this point, the Neo Zeon fleet would have no reason to pursue them. "I understand." Liam's voice in her reply indicated that she felt a little better.

"No matter what, they can't possibly ask us to detour off to another place…"

Otto was half-joking, but suddenly noticed Liam's face tensing up, and he turned over to where his eyes at where she was looking at.

Looking far away, he could tell that it was Alberto's round pudgy body kicking off the handrail from the other side, floating over to this mechanic deck. His face was pale for some reason, and he looked timid when he met Otto and the rest in the eyes, but changed his expression as he made a mysterious smile.

"I hope not…"

I have a bad feeling about this. Otto and Liam could not help but hold onto the handrail in unison, bracing themselves for the God of Plague that was about to arrive.

Part 9

"…I don't feel that there's a need for that."

"We can't be certain here, right? She's a Cyber-Newtype!"

It was unknown who was talking. Banagher opened his eyes and looked up at the fluorescent plate on the ceiling, the one with a metal net to prevent breaking inside the infirmary, just like the moment when he first woke up on the "Nahel Argama" for the first time—

"Besides, her muscles were enhanced too. Won't she try to resist with all she has once the drugs wear off? We should restrain her before that happens."

"Only those who were modified later on would be like that. She 's of the congenital genetic design type, so there's no need to administer drugs that would suppress such reactions.

It was the voices of Ensign Mihiro Oiwakken and Doctor Hassan—and Banagher could tell who they were talking about. His mind that just awoke from sleep started working, and he continued to lie on the bed as he turned around. "But…!" Mihiro's insecure voice rang in Banagher's ears, through the accordion curtain that was draped down from the ceiling.

"She looks stable emotionally, and more importantly, her wounds aren't healed. I can't allow such a patient wear a straitjacket in this condition."

"She's a Cyber-Newtype from Neo Zeon! She might suddenly attack when you aren't noticing, doctor—"

"Miss Marida definitely won't do that."

Before he realized it, Banagher spoke up. He supported his limp upper body as he pulled the curtain aside.

Hassan, who was seated in front of the treatment table, and Mihiro, who was standing beside him, both looked over at Banagher, "Banagher…!" Mihiro spoke up as she widened her eyes, and those eyes were immediately covered with a tint of malice. "He's here too?" the sharp questioning voice caused an awkward mood to spread through the infirmary.

"He's considered to be recovering from an illness. I gave him a drip to let him rest after treatment…how do you feel?"

Hassan's voice had a intent to calm the atmosphere, but Banagher did not listen properly. He continued to stare at Mihiro's stiff expression and muttered, "You want to make an injured person wear a straitjacket…" but Mihiro responded with a highly agitated voice, "This isn't something you should be interrupting at all?"

"Why is this? Miss Marida is an officer here. Don't you have a specific set of rules for dealing with prisoners?"

"The "Sleeves" are terrorists. No matter whether she's an officer or not, she's still a criminal."

"But Miss Marida…"

"Were you brainwashed on "Palau" too? She's the pilot of that 4 -winged, and the culprit that destroyed your colony. Who knows how many of our comrades were killed by her—"

"Even if that's true…! But there's nothing to talk about when you keep stereotypes like this, right? This isn't like you at all, Miss Mihiro."

Mihiro turned aside her face as she was at a loss of words, and went silent, "…I'll send a guard to stand by her. Tell me first if you want to move her from the infirmary. She told Hassan and hurriedly left the infirmary. "Understood." Hassan answered lazily as he waited for her to disappear behind the door before looking over at Banagher . "Do forgive her here." He said as he immediately turned his chair to the treatment table. Banagher's mystified stare was right at his white back.

"Ensign Riddhe did not return. She does have her emotions after all."

Ah. Banagher felt that the voice released from his chest was stuck in his throat, and he felt difficulty in breathing. *None of the crew on this ship, whether it was Mihiro or Hassan, knew the truth here* — the uneasy feeling suddenly rose up in him as he reached for the bottle on the side-table. He took a warm sip of water, swallowed it together with his guilty thoughts, and used his hands to touch head that fell asleep from who knew when.

Marida was in the Intensive Care Unit, while the other patients were inside the sick bay, so he and Hassan were the only ones here . Banagher saw the CT scan installation on the wall, and did not understand as he felt a chill, saying in an inquiring manner, "Is this the scan you mentioned about before?" Hassan turned his head slightly, "Huh?"

"You checked whether I was a Cyber-Newtype too, didn't you? "

"Looking at the facilities here, the results are clear." Hassan's words when he first woke up in this infirmary became a source of anxiety , and it continued to ring in Banagher's ears. Hassan scratched his head in an awkward manner as he turned his head to the table and answered, "Well, I really felt like investigating when you suddenly came out of the "Gundam" like that."

"Is Miss Marida really just like what she said? What is a Cyber-Newtype?"

"That's a fantasy those crazy scientists have. They want to use artificial means to create Newtypes, but in fact, they only created human weapons for war."

Banagher's mind recalled the face of the blue-eyed girl on the glass window of the capsule. There was no clear sense of realism, and he tried to dig deeper into this other person's memory that would fade off like an echo—his clenched fists trembled slightly, and he let out a voice, "How can they do such things?"

"What exactly are Newtypes?"

Hassan turned his table and looked at Banagher, "You do understand the theory behind it, right?" and spoke with a heavy voice. "Of course…" Banagher felt his momentum wear out somewhat as he answered.

"It's mainly talking about how humans who come to space will evolve, about how the perception will become stronger, and that humans can talk to each other without misunderstandings."

"That's right. Using your body as example, the damage you sustained from the G-force this time has become less compared to the time when I checked on you before. Even with the protection of the pilot suit, this kind of recovery speed is still shocking. Do you know what it means?"

"No…"

"Your body is starting to get used to the "Gundam". You only rode on it 2, 3 times however."

These were unexpected words. Banagher's mouth was wide open in shock, but Hassan left it aside as he continued, "Humans have an ability to adapt to its surroundings."

"The data showed that when the Plague started spreading through the Old Ages, the death rates declined just 50 years later. There was no need for the replacement of generations to take place , so this would probably be the results of the human body acquiring immunity under tough environments. In other words,

Life would often find the most suitable way to live and adapt. Humans came to space, and expanded its understanding to make up for their knowledge of the vast space. Theoretically, this is possible, and I personally feel that this isn't impossible."

Hassan leaned on the back of his chair and said with an expression that looked like it had seen the space behind the wall. *The senses or understanding abilities will expand to make up for the recognition of the wide living space. If that's the case, it makes sense* Banagher felt thought, and hoped that it was the case. *Misunderstandings and differing views will disappear, and hearts that can connect to each other can embrace each other and understand each other well. If that moment was a connection between Newtypes—*

"…If all of humanity became like that, there probably won't be any wars anymore."

"That may be the case. Or the mass-killings may end up worse than now."

"Why?"

"Think about it. Everything you're thinking will reach the other parties. Those adults who treat lies as lubricants over things will definitely be running away in fear. Besides, there will be a new divide between Newtypes and Oldtypes."

"Divide…"

"Also, Newtypes are said to be born in shape. How can the Earth residents who have steady lives endure this after having sent

the remaining population over to space? It's like the master role's reversed here."

"In that case, let's just send everyone into space and make them evolve in one go."

Banagher knew that he was saying childish things, but he still said it out. He could not express the feelings he had at that moment in words to Hassan and Mihiro. This anxiety caused his emotions to be twisted, and could possibly cause uneasiness in others. If the end result was that the war no one hoped for would occur, humanity would be a lost cause. As long as Newtypes definitely existed, they should try for a possibility where the whole of humanity could evolve even if many forceful means were required.

Hassan put the pen he was playing with in his hand onto the table, and silently continued, "In the past, a man once said this."

"The reason why humans won't stop fighting is because humans are stepping onto the entrance to evolution. If there were really a possibility to turn into Newtypes, we should let the scientists experiment on the Cyber-Newtypes. If we left human evolution to nature, humanity will kill itself off in the end."

Banagher felt like he was told what his suggestion would bring, and the hot air within his stomach cool off as he lowered his head.

"He does have his own reasons for saying that, but…"

"I feel that the way he looks at things is too sad. That kind of possibility…"

Possibility—the god that is created within people's hearts by believing. Banagher did not wish that it was something that could be obtained by ripping people's heads or mindsets. This would only end up putting possibilities within a mold and suffocate as a result . "I feel the same". Hassan said as he smiled.

"So even if it's inconvenient, we should use this current power we have to try our best to understand each other. It's not about fighting over which side is to succumb to another, but to find a point of compromise both sides can agree on. However…the road sure is tough."

Hassan said with a sigh as he looked over at the door Mihiro walked out. Even someone of his age could not solve any conflict beside him. Banagher stared at the side of Hassan's face, and though he felt that Hassan was someone who could have the same thoughts as him, he could not tell the truth about Riddhe and the rest. Banagher felt a dangerous feeling seep inside his bones as he looked down at the icy cold floor.

Part 10

The plaster that was stuck on the face hurt. The fragments of the broken helmet visor did not pierce the face, but it still left multiple scraps on the white skin. This was the result of the body being forced out from the linear seat and the normal suit and bouncing around inside the cockpit.

Also, there were signs of bleeding all over the body, and it was said that there were a few broken ribs. Banagher saw that the body that was covered by the blanket was not moving as he looked over at the person with her left hand under a drip in low gravity, noticed the injuries from the collisions, and looked behind.

Banagher heard the sound from the electrocardiogram and turned around. *As expected, I shouldn't be here. She may have recovered, but honestly, what do I intend to say? It's completely ridiculous that the person who caused her to be injured comes over to be concerned about her wounds. I don't even have the power to save her—* Banagher turned behind to look, saw the long eyebrows that were sealed up, and immediately looked down as he stood in front of the ICU door. "The roles have reversed." At that moment, the voice came from behind, and Banagher, who was about to reach for the door, had his hand frozen.

Marida Cruz was lying on the bed, and her blue eyes were staring at Banagher. "Miss Marida…" the voice that wanted to say this was stuck in the throat as he could only look back at her eyes.

Is she laughing at herself for being so injured and how she got captured…no, those are eyes that had already made their realizations, relaxed and serene. Banagher felt his chest tightening and his vision become wet as he approached her at the bed. The vital signs indicator awaited, and under it, Marida gave a light smile as she said, "Don't just look at me." as she turned her bloodshot eyes to the ceiling.

"…I have no idea why it ended up like that either."

These words naturally popped out, and Banagher's lips were trembling. Marida turned her neck slightly, and her chestnut-color hair that was tied in a knot on the right shoulder shook slightly.

"I felt like I wasn't myself at that time…no, it's like something that was suppressed was lit up, exploding all the time. I know the person in front of me is you, Miss Marida, but…"

"You were swallowed by the machine."

Marida said calmly as she interrupted the words that were to no avail. Banagher looked up and looked at her.

"It's the result of the reverse flow in the Psycommu. You thought you were piloting it, but unknowingly, you we being controlled by it. The system forced you to do this."

"The system…?"

"I felt a strong denying consciousness within. Most likely, it's the capabilities that were hidden insidethat "Gundam"s system. That system will search out Newtypes and destroy them, even if it finds that they're Cyber-Newtypes…"

At this point, Marida's face winced suddenly, and the pain that she suppressed was seeping out through the gaps between her teeth. Banagher saw her raise her right arm slightly, and took the jug on the side table to her face. Marida took the bottle to her lips, took a small sip, and took a slight breath. She then spoke with a hoarse voice, "A machine can't determine the difference between a real one and a created one."

"But humans are different. Humans can sense after all."

The pale fingers covered Banagher's hand together with the bottle, and Marida's gentle smile spread on her dry lips. *Just like this.* Banagher felt her blue eyes saying this to him as he put his other hand on Marida's right hand. Banagher put his fingers on the cold and saddening fingertips and looked at the eyes that seemed that they would lose focus if he relaxed for just a moment. He was trying to keep an irreplaceable life here.

"Miss Marida, did you…?"

"I saw your inner heart."

His heart pumped wildly for no reason, and the strength disappeared from his trembling hand. Marida pulled her right hand slightly, and her face that was not smiling anymore looked away from Banagher.

"Perhaps you're the same kind as me."

"…What does that mean?"

Marida turned her stare that only exchanged glances with him for an instant back to the ceiling and said, "If that's not the case, I won't have any position to say this." Banagher could not accept the meaning of these words as what she wanted, and glanced down at the pair of blue eyes that were averting unnaturally.

"But…the "Gundam" stopped at the last moment. Your will caused the system to succumb. I think it's the core inside your heart that allowed you to do that."

"Core…?"

"As for us, we don't have that."

Marida continued silently as she let her clear eyes look up at the ceiling. "That's why my sisters and I could become one with the machine. We're not related to natural birth, just existences floating around randomly…"

The hands that were extended outside the blanket weakly suddenly tugged at it. This was the silence someone who saw her end had, and a hollow presence that seemed to pass through space came from within her body. “Miss Marida…” Banagher’s musing voice was trembling.

“Don’t mind me, Banagher. No matter what realities you have to face directly in the future, don’t lose yourself. You have to keep saying ‘even so’.”

Banagher felt like he was just given a slap on the face as he retreated slightly. Marida’s eyes gave a strong glow that allowed neither pity nor respect to approach her as she looked right at him.

“That’s your core…there’s another system sleeping inside that “ Gundam”, and your core will become the power to awaken it. The one who left the “Laplace Box” to it…”

The voice and stare that came from deep within her said this, only to be interrupted by a painful moan. The vital signs alarm went off, and Marida got up and winced in pain. “Miss Marida…!” he tried to hold her hand as he called out, but was pushed onto the floor by her. The drip stand was knocked down, CLANG, and a noise echoed through the room loudly.

That’s enough. It felt like someone said this. *Don’t waver because of me*— Banagher did not have time to think of the words resonating in Marida’s expression as Hassan came rushing in from the infirmary next down. He held down Marida’s body that got up and roared at the door “GET THE CARDIOTONI! THE DIGOXIN

WILL DO!", and the nursing soldier frantically rushed in as he got ready to inject. Banagher retreated from the wall, and through Hassan's back, he saw Marida's limp limbs. As Hassan held her down, pulled aside the blanket and opened the pajamas, the nursing soldier's needle approached the bare cleavage. "Her muscles are enhanced. Injecting the needle in normally won't work . You have to raise it and stab it in." Hassan said, and the pale nursing soldier nodded before raising the syringe over his head with both hands.

A tiny silver light could be seen reflected from the needle due to the headlamp. Banagher closed his eyes right before the needle was stabbed in, turned his face, closed his ears, and left the ICU just like that. *You can't do anything. You'll just hurt her.* Banagher was pressured by the surging voice within his heart, and despite tumbling a few times, he still managed to move from the infirmary to the corridor.

"Oi, what's with you?" Banagher pretended not to hear the pursuing guard's voice as he ran in the gravity block, the path becoming a gradual one. *What system, what core? I'm just standing right where I am. The fact that I tried to kill Marida before will never change. I was manipulated by the "Unicorn Gundam" system—what the heck is that? The "Laplace Box", Vist Foundation, dad's voice hidden inside my memories…I don't want to care about them anymore.*

I don't want to ride on the "Unicorn Gundam" again. This thought came out from countless words in his mind, and he stopped in his tracks. He put his hand on the wall, calmed his frantic breathing, and clenched the hand that once sucked up Cardeas' blood. *Aren't these all things that couldn't be helped? I could only do that at that time.*

As Banagher suppressed the bitterness in his heart and answer the face in his memory, a certain familiar round object appeared from the ends of his sight.

That object which was the size of a basketball rolled on the low-gravity wall and circled around Banagher's legs. (You don't look well, Banagher.) Haro let out this synthesized voice, and Banagher looked around the corridor. *There's no reason why Haro would appear on its own,* and as expected, familiar faces appeared from behind the cross-junction, waving at him.

Come along with us. Takuya Irei looked around, and mouthed; Micott Bartsch could be seen fthere as well. Banagher did meet them a few times after arriving back from "Palau", but he never had the chance to talk with them properly. He too looked around his surroundings, and then turned his stare back at his friends' faces that felt abnormally far away. He kicked the floor to make up for this distance.

Takuya prompted Micott, who would not look at Banagher in the eyes, and went off to the lift. At this moment, a crew with a Nautical Branch emblem passed by the trio, but it seemed that he was already used to seeing civilians move around the ship. Banagher turned his back on the crew member who did not look back at him as he followed behind Takuya. In his arms, Haro flapped its ears, and this familiar voice caused Banagher to feel really happy.

Part 11

"…It's tough to see Ensign Mihiro so depressed like that, isn't it ? She'll definitely recover if you just tell her that Mr Riddhe's still alive."

The extremely hard and large plastic window reflected Takuya' s face as he sighed. The numerous lights of the stars scattered outside the window were blocked by the reflected light within the room, and the stars could not be seen clearly. Banagher recalled Mihiro's stiff face as she walked out of the infirmary, and muttered , "So that's the kind of relationship they have…" and his muttering face was reflected on the window as well, resulting in a depressed expression appearing in the eternal darkness of space.

There was no one in the observation room located on the boardside of the battleship. There were three windows on both sides of the room, 5m long and probably 3m wide, creating a wide space that was hard to imagine that it was inside a battleship. The security on Takuya and the rest inside the ship had become a lot more lenient, and Takuya used this time to understand the structure of the ship during these past few days. Before he called Banagher over, it seemed that he had other places to think of as well. Also, as Takuya grasped the positions of the surveillance cameras, he said that they had to look at the windows when talking, and not look back inside the room. If the cameras caught them, someone could tell what they were talking about by the movements of their lips.

Banagher heard all about how Takuya and Micott followed Riddhe's plan, endured a nerve-wrecking escape process and got here. However, he himself had nothing he could briefly tell them

about as he could only stare listlessly at Haro floating in the zero gravity. Takuya used his foot to hook onto the handrail, remained in a floating position upside-down, and said, "I don't know why especially…"

"It seems that the people on this ship don't know that Audrey disappeared. Only the 3 of us know about this, so we have to be careful. Right Micott?"

"Yeah…" Micott said on the bench and answered. She met Banagher in the eyes, and immediately lowered her head again. Banagher frowned, and Takuya stood beside him, scratching his hair hard, *geez*, and showed an anxious expression.

"I'll get something to drink. Do you two want anything?"

Takuya kicked off the handrail and floated towards the automatic door located at the wall behind. "I'll go too, Banagher was about to kick the floor too, only to be pushed back by Takuya sternly, "No need." *Just stay where you are.* Takuya moved his hand that was placed on his mouth and gave hand signals, telling Banagher to talk to Micott before moving out of the observation room.

What was that? Banagher grumbled and turned to Micott as he was at a loss of options. Micott sat on the bench facing the window , still unwilling to meet Banagher in the eyes. The daughter of a factory supervisor, studying at a private school, the active confident person who was too dazzling for the students at the Institute, was at this point a stark contrast as she looked utterly depressed.

Suddenly, Banagher recalled the soft feeling he felt resting on the back. It caused him to feel awkward, and he felt a suffocating tightness gnawing at his chest, making it hard for him to stay at this place. He rubbed his nose that was not itchy and looked outside. "It's amazing that you guys managed to escape from a military ship." He tried to fill this emptiness with his voice, only for her to answer, "You're the amazing one, Banagher…". He thought that her stare was meeting his of the reflected window panel, but she immediately lowered her head again and held onto her hands cupping her knees.

"…I'm sorry."

"Eh?"

"I'm talking about Mineva…Audrey. If I didn't tip off…"

Banagher had already half-forgotten about this, and his chest was stabbed by Micott's lost expression as he turned to her, letting out a mumbling voice as he said, "That's…"

"I'm the one who has to apologize here. I let you and Takuya get involved in this."

"We're the ones who wanted to follow along. You don't have to apologize for that."

"But…"

"Besides, I might be the one who egged you on."

It was unknown if Micott felt a little better as she showed a smile on her lips. Banagher blinked in a puzzled manner.

"If you're that concerned about her, go get her back…I did say that on the rooftop of the mansion, don't you remember?"

Banagher started to recall the incident that happened a week ago as it felt as distant as a year ago, and felt his tense chest tightening somewhat. "Yeah…" As he muttered, his lips naturally smiled as he turned his bitterly smiling face to the window. "I'm so stupid for saying such things." Micott said as she stood up and leaned her body towards the window.

"But since you helped her out once, you have to bear responsibility and help her until the end. That girl's feeling rather down inside despite making a strong look."

Micott spoke in her usual tone as she finally turned her stare over at him. Despite sounding rather forced, these words of hers did have her flair. "I understand." Banagher answered and looked at the space outside the window. He felt the concerns in his chest being undone, and the clear lights of the many stars caused his body to feel comfortable and relaxed.

"I wonder if they reached Earth safely."

"Ensign Riddhe's accompanying her, so it should be fine."

He answered Micott, who asked this question softly, and stared at the darkness that was gathered at the window. They were about to enter the geostationary orbit, but Earth, which was located on

the bowside, could not be seen. The moon could not be seen, and the lights of the space colonies could not be seen either as only the endless darkness permeated outside.

The distance from Earth to the Moon could not be measured in lightspeed, and even the term 'wide' would be considered too small. At this point, the living area for humanity was limited between Earth and the Moon, and even so, that would be very large. If they broke up both Earth and space, it would be difficult view both living environments as the same world, and there would be a divide. Humans were creatures who were originally supposed to be based on land, recognising their distances and spaces. It had been a mere 100 years since humanity started using space as a place to live in.

If people don't become Newtypes, we won't be able to make up for this divide. However, can humanity really evolve after only 100 years? Doctor Hassan said that a sudden mutation is possible. If I'm one such case, I can sense Audrey's existence as she heads to Earth—

"You have an adult expression there."

Micott, who glanced at Banagher secretly, said this in a muttering-like manner. Banagher did not understand her meaning completely as he looked back at her silently.

"You're so open-minded now. It feels like it's not the Banagher I know anymore."

"Is that so…"

After being told this, Banagher realized that he did not know anything about this person called Riddhe, but unbelievably, he had no sense of insecurity. Through the impression he had when they passed by each other on the ship and when they had their backs facing each other—*it seems like he's someone I can get along with instinctively.* If Banagher could believe such a vague feeling, he would feel that he could leave Audrey to him. Basically, she, who had the taboo name of Mineva, was never suited to stay on a Federation army ship in the first place. If Riddhe had a way to break this deadlock, Banagher felt that that it would cause the situation to change.

If I want to believe in people, I have to be prepared. No matter whether I look like an adult now, I never had this thought 10 days ago. Is it because other people's thoughts resting within me have covered my thoughts? Banagher thought in vain, and with a sharp pain in his body, he recalled Marida's face. "Banagher…" Micott tapped him on the shoulder, and her voice caused him to recover.

She turned to the door. Takuya was there, holding 3 coffee tubes. There were two tall and husky people behind Takuya, giving stiff looks as they approached Banagher. Banagher met one of them in the eye, and his chest that was feeling relaxed a while ago tensed up again. He got mentally prepared and waited for him to talk.

"Banagher Links, we hope that you'll come along with us."

Commander Daguza Mackle said with a knife-sharp unmoving stare. "…What is it?" Banagher responded, but Daguza did not respond to this question as he floated his large body over to him.

Those eyes that looked more artificial than Marida's showed a cold glow right in front of Banagher's eyes. Banagher exerted strength on his body that was about to falter in face of the Daguza's pressure, and took his stare silently.

Part 12

At that moment, the bright afternoon sun on the South side was starting to darken. "That's the one." Ronan Marcenas was prompted by the voice of Vice-admiral Mauri as he looked at the Eastern sky through the window glass.

With their backs facing the messy clouds, three black shadows gradually appeared. They started to get bigger in front of their eyes, showing their plane silhouettes as they started to descend onto the runway below.

Out of the trio, Ronan saw the two machines that were surrounding the centre one. *Those are Federation fighter jets called TIN COD 2, I believe.* As he thought about that, the machine in the middle suddenly slowed down, and Ronan could not help but put his face close to the window. He saw the machine that was slowing down disintegrate its parts at the next moment, and formed a silhouette that was completely different from before.

The steam that was released in an explosive manner became a thin layer that covered the machine that became a humanoid. *That's the "Delta Plus"—is that the mobile suit my own son 'deserted' in?* Ronan tidied his tie and stared at the smart-looking unit that had a thick grey color. Ronan was already used to seeing such 20m tall

giants before the One Year Year, when the Principality of Zeon army launched the "Zakus" onto Earth, and though it did not make this man who was in his fifties speechless, the instant transformation of the plane into a humanoid was still amazing. The "Delta Plus" burst out the main thrusters on the back as the two TIN Cods IIs passed by from above. It did not descend onto the normal runway, but onto the landing spot for mobile suit training. The flames from jets supporting the large body caused the light to be refracted, and the glass of this command post more than 200m away rattled slightly.

A car ramp, fire trucks, and electric cars with armed guards were mobilized at that time as they rushed to the spot where the mobile suit landed. The "Delta Plus" landed splendidly onto the middle of the circle, the carbon lined spot that was burnt from the thruster flares. The deep rumbling reached the reception room where Ronan was, and the coffee laid out on the table rattled slightly. The humanoid machine put the beam rifle into the back rack before kneeling down. After that, it seemed to cease all actions.

So that boy can pilot such a thing. Ronan imagined his son's face on the rugged-looking machine, and felt a sense of pride and also a sense of abandonment. "What he does really troubles me." Ronan looked back the moment he saw that, and noticed Vice-Admiral Mauri, who had all sorts of medals lined on his chest, give a concentrated frown as he looked outside the window.

"He left the battlefield on his own and broke through the Earth defense line on his own…because of the commotion beforehand, the defense line is already prepared to strike back anytime. I really wonder what will happen if we were a step late in our response."

The Lieutenant Colonel, who was still waiting together just now , had left the room in order to supervise the retrieval. The attending officer who was acting as an aide went out with the commander too, so only Ronan and Vice-Admiral Mauri were left inside this reception room as they faced the runaway. "I understand. Thank you for your grace." Ronan said with his back facing the other man. It had been 5 hours since Douglas came barging into the office this morning, having spent half a day contacting all related personnel and deployments to cancel all his scheduled appointments; and he could not bring himself to face the Vice-Admiral was giving a look that he did his best like this.

Even so, Mauri's words were not an exaggeration. The Marcenas' family name did reach within the army, but there was no reason that it would be so familiar that they would let anyone randomly pilot a suspicious machine and invade Earth like that as and when they wished. It was luck at work that Duty Officer of the Anti-Air forces made the call for confirmation, and it was luck at work when Ronan just so happened to be there, awaiting his slightly late breakfast. If the situation happened during a Parliamentary Session, the contact would definitely bounce around amongst the secretaries, and the "Delta Plus" would most likely be shot down without any confirmation of its identity.

If one had to mention it further, this Vice-Admiral Mauri would definitely be considered lucky too for being in North America at the right time. The "Delta Plus" was once detained in the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, and the reason why it was brought to this Atlanta Naval Air Station was mostly due to the power of Vice-Admiral Mauri, who used his authority as the highest ranked Aide. Mauri was getting ready to enter politics, and he had been spending half the year on Earth, working to expand his relations with people all over the world. In this sense, he would be the lucky one.

In the Senate Council of the Earth Federation, the largest council—the Migration Issues Committee had the initiative in deciding the Space Administration Plan. There were not many chances that he could make the Council Chairperson owe him a favour. I'll hear out what happened later on." Mauri, who spoke on, smartly emphasized his authority, and on the other hand, his face was showing surprise about this luck that befell on him.

"But is this really not what you ordered, Chief Senator?"

"Don't joke around, whether it was the mail before this or this incident, they're both shocking revelations to me. Of all bad things to get involved in, that incompetent son of mine actually got involved with the "Box"."

Ronan immediately let out these words to observe the expression on Mauri's face that was tanned from golfing. Mauri immediately looked and vaguely met Ronan in the eyes through the reflection on the window before answering timidly, "

Regarding that, the Senate Council would have mistakes too." Ronan noticed that expression which relaxed at that moment, determined that he was not suitable for politics, and looked outside the window.

"There aren't just one or two pets reared by the Vist Foundation and Anaheim within our circle. I suppose since it's not an actual battle, not all guns will be pointed out…I didn't know anything until I saw the mail sent to you, Chief Senator, about your son being a crew member of the "Nahel Argama"."

"It will be easy to deal with if the military can understand the importance of the "Box". They actually let the Foundation instigate them into letting the "Nahel Argama" attack "Palau" on its own… logically, it is possible to kill off the "Sleeves" if Londo Bell were fully mobilized."

"What you say may be reasonable, but we have no idea what exactly the "Box" contains. It's really hard to use more military force than that when we're not even certain of what it is…"

Mauri lost the smug expression he had before as he spoke with the look of a public official, a general. *This man is lucky,* Ronan thought. *It's better for him to view this urban legend of how the existence of this "Box" can topple the world as something with very questionable validity here.* Ronan reached his hand to stroke his chin that dropped noticeably, tidied the tie that was loose, and argued back without looking, "It seems the "Sleeves" have abandoned " Palau"."

"Have the Senate Council understood the meaning behind this?"

"Of course. Since Neo Zeon gave up on their base, it seems like they'll launch an all-out attack while destroying everything. We should thus strengthen our defences—"

"Nope. Full Frontal is a very shrewd man. He won't give up a base easily if he estimates that he won't be able to match the Federation in strength."

"No way. But Neo Zeon's current fighting strength is less…"

"There's still the "Box"."

Ronan concluded and looked right at Mauri. Mauri gulped and gave a doubting look to the other man.

"The mobile suit in this UC plan has the key to opening the "Box"…I did hear that the "Nahel Argama" reclaimed it, but there's definitely a transmitter installed by the "Sleeves" there. Don't take random action on that mobile suit; it'll be better if we can hurry up and send it to "Luna II" fast."

"Yes, but…"

"The Federation took the initiative, right?" Ronan pursued on while staring at the mumbling Mauri. "The "Sleeves" will also give pursuit. If we let them make contact with the "Box" first…"

"I'll send the message to headquarters."

Mauri said quickly and hurriedly scampered out of the reception room. It was already late, but in a certain sense, he would still work hard, and would have the excuse that he did all he could. His instincts in regards to his job were not sharp, but people like him would show terrific reflexes to protect themselves. “That’s good.” Ronan muttered to himself and looked out of the window again. The “Delta Plus” lowered its head right in front of him, and was surrounded by numerous a large number of vehicles , giving off red signal lights as they surrounded the scene furiously .

The car ramp was moved to the side of the giant, and the roof reached the cockpit cover at the abdomen. It seemed that the lights were still refracted due to the leftover heat from the machine, and for safety sake, the guards who were the size of beans raised their rifles and aimed it at the cockpit. The wireless communicator should have connected, but the “Delta Plus” showed no signs of opening. He probably understood that he has no right to grumble even if he was shot to death—no, he probably considered the safety of his passenger.

Ronan could not help but sigh. Most likely, his son was requested by his superior officer to send a mail for aid from the isolated “Nahel Argama”. After he helped carry out procedures to withdraw him, he escaped back onto the battleship, causing chaos, took a fighter unit on his own, went right back at Ronan, and even had a ridiculous passenger with him, the Princess of Zeon.

Even if they manage to block the media, the Dakar residents with sharp eagle-like eyes were not that that easy to deal with. In a

few days, the developments would spread amongst the Senators, and it will affect the countermeasures the Congress would make regarding the "Laplace Box". While he wanted to reveal the intentions of the plotters and deliberately keep himself away from this incident, he still ended up being involved at the core of this incident. *Is this the magic of the "Box"?* Ronan mused, and his chest started to ache as he clasped the hands behind his back.

Riddhe, you came to the last place you should be at— Ronan felt his chest suffocating as he murmured, and he silently noticed the cockpit cover on the "Delta Plus" abdomen opening. He saw the pilot raise his hands and walk out from the cockpit. It had been 3 years, but he could tell from first glance that the person in the pilot suit was his own son as the son walked down the car ramp before removing his helmet in front of the guards. Ronan felt that his son was looking right at him, and his chest started to ache again.

Part 13

Riddhe walked down the car ramp as the guards surrounded him with stares of killing intent around him, and walked towards the military electric car. The atmosphere that blew right in his face was thick and hot, and this was the air of the hometown his skin was familiar. He supported Mineva, who had her back straight, but seemed to have difficulty walking onto the electric car, and they were about to be taken to the command post behind the " Delta Plus".

The body that had forgotten about gravity became lazy and weak, and sweat filled the armpits of the pilot suit. It seemed that Mineva was in the same situation as her body that was wearing

the heavy normal suit slumped into the seat of the car deeply. He heard that she once stopped by Earth for a moment, but to the Spacenoids who were born in space, the gravity on Earth was really a struggle to deal with. Due to the restrains of the structure, the centrifuge gravity in the space colonies would be less than 1G by a few digits on the decimals, but it was this slight difference that the bodies felt heavier even though theythought they got used to it.

To Riddhe, this was the first time he experienced real gravity in three years—but he could tell that his body was quickly getting used to it. the wind blew by the wind runway, and the air that had the smell of the surrounding fauna and dirt awoke his cells, gradually washing away the tightrope-like fatigue he had for the past two days. And there was the soothing humidity that covered his skin. The ground and sun of Southern USA created this damp air the space colonies would definitely be unable to recreate. *I'm back.* This thought suddenly rushed up Riddhe's mind, and he looked up at the blue sky above his head. The sky that was not blocked by anything and was expanded out endlessly appeared in front of him. At the same time, the helmet on the attachment hanging at the back let out a click.

Riddhe reached his neck and turned behind. He met the guard sitting behind in the eyes, and immediately looked away once he realized the source of the sound. The rifle that twitched slightly hit the helmet, and the guard kept his silent face looking in front. An air of awkwardness was blown by the wind, and the rubber tires' smell that wore down on the runway irritated Riddhe's nose.

Perhaps it was because Riddhe brazenly used the name of the Marcenas family that he and Mineva were able to make their way all the way here safely, but they still could not relax at this point. The guards were still pretending to be attentive at this point, but on one look, anyone could tell that they were wary of suspicious people. *What reaction will they show if they realized that the one sitting beside them was the descendant of the Zabi family? Well, better wait for the orders and act around it than to think about it mindlessly.* Riddhe answered himself, and he held back the urge to turn his head so casually as before. It was pointless to treat others as people on their side. This rigid organization, the army, would show no mercy after parting ways, and since he was already at odds with them, he would have to find a way to settle this. Riddhe felt the heaviness of this realization he just picked up, and silently stared at the command post he was gradually approaching.

It was a plain 4-storeyed building, and connected beside it was a control tower. At the hangar that was connected to the runway, there were mechanic soldiers wearing military uniforms, surrounding the opened machine, and the TIN Cod IIs that were parked were glowing because of the sunlight reflected off the windscreen. None of these scenes or the noises of the engines echoing around were unusual scenes in an Air Base. However, the command post right in front at this point showed an obviously abnormal presence, and it vaguely spread a tense atmosphere through the entire base.

Riddhe exchanged looks with that abnormal presence. The presence had his back facing the limousine parked on the runway, and his blond hair that was started to become thin swayed with

the wind as he was looking over here with the anxious base commanders. Riddhe did predict that he would order for him to be moved to Atlanta, but he never expected the presence to welcome him personally. The electric car ferried Riddhe, whose body went stiff inadvertently, and stopped in front of the command post. Riddhe followed the guard who quickly got off, and stepped on the earth he had not stepped on for 3 years.

He controlled his feet that felt like they were about to sink into the ground, and stared at the Vice-Admiral amidst the row of uniforms. He closed his heels together, and the Vice-admiral gave a silent expression as he saluted back. The base commanders too gave empty salutes, not hiding their expressions that showed that they got into trouble as they looked behind Riddhe. Riddhe reached his hand out to stop Mineva from getting off the car, partly intending to block these stares.

The abnormal presence—Ronan Marcenas silently watched Riddhe's expression. He had already taken a step back from the line of officers, but the fact remained undoubted that he was at the center of a heavy atmosphere. "It's been a while." Riddhe walked right at him and as he spoke with a tone like he was talking to his superior. Ronan looked somewhat doubtful as he looked away and stared right behind Riddhe, "Is she the one?" Mineva walked to Riddhe stealthily before he could even nod, and said,

"I'm Mineva Lao Zabi. I'm able to land because of your son's goodwill."

The emerald eyes stared right at Ronan without fear, and the surrounding officers too looked like they were overwhelmed by

this pressure as they checked themselves again. Riddhe felt a little delight as he saw the Vice-admiral and company close their heels together, and stared at Mineva's face that was shining under the sunlight. "I'm Ronan Marcenas." Ronan might had recognized this person as the real one as he reached his right hand out, showing a dull glint in his eyes.

"You must be tired after such a long journey, I suppose? Once the disease prevention checks are done, I'll immediately invite you to my house. Please proceed here."

After shaking hands, Ronan looked over at the Vice-Admiral, who looked at the base commanders, who in turn looked at their aides, and stares continued to pass down until the leader of the guards' squadron. With the leader's prompting, Mineva started to head towards the command post. Riddhe exchanged looks with her, suppressed his urge to accompany her, and faced Ronan.

I'm not guilty of anything, and I haven't done anything that stained the family's name. I'm just fulfilling my duty and responsibility as someone involved—Riddhe repeated the thoughts he had for the past two days as he looked over at the same-colored eyes as his. Riddhe ignored the Vice-Admiral and company, who seemed to detect that this was an awkward mood as they returned back to the command post, and said, "I won't try to find excuses."

"No matter what happened, I never intended to ask the family for help. But just this once…"

"You're just saying excuses all the time. Say anything you want to say later. Hurry up and change your clothes."

Ronan left behind this voice Riddhe was used to hearing and turned around. Ronan was strict and by the book, and would remained unmoved even when facing his relatives. He would always tell people to explain the conclusions and the responses, and would separate himself from any personal reasons that were

involved in the process without mercy. Riddhe faced the back of this father of this, and had some form of sadness melted within him. “Yes!” Riddhe saluted this annoying figure before Ronan could stop and turn his head, and turned away.

What exactly am I hoping for? I still have to argue against this troublesome person after this and ensure Mineva’s safety. Riddhe could not help but feel incensed as he felt like he was betrayed and developed such doubts. He walked towards the entrance of the command post, and the sharp stares on his back immediately disappeared as the sound of the limousine door closed right behind him. At this moment, the “Delta Plus”, which knelt motionless at the runway, looked helpless as it remained alone under the damp atmosphere.

Part 14

“You’re saying Her Highness Mineva arrived on Earth?”

Angelo Sauper could not help but parrot as he turned his stare onto the paper that recorded the emergency report. “This is a telegram from the Republic”. The attending official from the intelligence department answered as such.

“There was a Federation unit that passed through the Earth defense line with the authority of a Senator. It’s likely that Her Highness was on it at that time.”

“It wasn’t a misdirection? They wanted to move her secretly, but deliberately caused this large commotion…”

If the information came from the Zeon Republic, the source of this transmission should be a Neo Zeon supporter hidden amongst the Federation Senate Council or a lobbyist from the military industry who hoped for 'tension amidst peace'. It was reliable information, but one would get the feeling that they arranged it deliberately while trying to overblow things. *What do they intend to do by choosing to send out this message that has so many holes in it?* Angelo stared at the emergency telegram that merely recorded this message as he floated around the bridge of the "Rewloola". "Why would it?" He turned around on hearing this voice.

"This isn't fake information released just to lure us out. The Federation does have its privacy as well."

The tall and large body clad in crimson red uniform said this as he stepped off the floating and sat onto the commander seat that oversaw the bridge, saying, "Captain, where's the "Nahel Argama " at now?" Captain Hill, who was seated on the Captain's seat beside him, immediately reached his hand onto the control panel on the armrest the moment he heard that.

"Soon, they'll enter the satellite geostationary orbit. It's strange to take this path if they want to head to "Luna II". They'll end up moving into the Earth geostationary orbit if they keep this up.

The predicted trajectory of the "Mock Trojan Horse"—"Nahel Argama" was drawn on the navigation monitor located on the hologram screen, and the locations of the "Garencieres", pursuing it from behind, and the "Rewloola", hidden amongst the shoal space region, were shown at this point. It had been 2 days since they abandoned "Palau", and the "Garencieres" had invaded the

absolute defense line of Earth as it tried to track down the “Mock Trojan Horse”. This indicated that the enemy was not headed to “ Luna II”, but to the geostationary orbit revolving around Earth. “ So they’re headed to the designated coordinates?” Frontal mused as the lips under the mask showed a smirk. He then turned towards Angelo, who was still holding onto the emergency telegraph.

“Are you going to launch, Angelo?”

In response to the sudden topic that was raised, an electric jolt passed through Angelo’s body as he let out a reply, “Yes!” Angelo kicked the wall nearby, floated to the communication operator seat , chased away the person on duty and started operating on the control panel. The distance the enemy ship had, the ship’s fighting capabilities, equipment; all these data were summoned onto one monitor, and the simulation to determine whether they could carry out the plan began.

“If we have the SHACKLES boosters on, we’ll reach within 10 hours at this distance. However, the mobile suits will have to move on their own.”

It would take too many resources to direct the fleet scattered within the shoal space region to take action, and there would also be the risk that they would end up fighting the Federation army on a full front scale. it would be simply enough to deem the “Mock Trojan Horse” as a target and let the mobile suit squadron attack it. The problem would be the transportation, but the journey there would be possible if they could install the large capacity SHACKLES propeller Tanks onto the Sub Flight System. Once the

operation was over, the reclamation would be left to the " Garencieres".

The simulation ended in less than 30 seconds, and Angelo concluded, "Alright, launch preparations complete!" He looked over his shoulder and said this to Frontal. *Our hearts are linked,* as this feeling definitely rose in his heart, "Captain!" Hill interrupted with a chiding tone.

"Since there's a transmission from the "Garencieres", we can see the visuals from the psyco marker here. I'm wondering if there's a need for you to launch."

"It's not in my nature to standby. Also, we need an enemy to make the "Unicorn" activate its NT-D."

The only one that can complete this mission is the "Sinanju" that is equipped with the Psycommu". There was this meaning behind these words, and Frontal stepped off the commander seat as Hill watched him leave from behind with a half-forsaken look. "Because you're the one in the position of supreme commander here…" Frontal did not mind this musing and let out a voice that echoed through the bridge.

"If Her Highness Mineva is not on the ship, it doesn't matter if we sink the "Mock Trojan Horse". Once we unlock the seal to the Laplace Program, our side will reclaim the "Unicorn Gundam" again."

This was the voice of his declaration. At that moment, Angelo's mind immediately thought of the face of prisoner on the "Mock Trojan Horse", Marida Cruz, but this was not enough to put a

dampener to the excitement rising in his chest. “Yes!” He answered and closed his feet before anyone else could.

“We won’t miss this time. The coordinates indicated by that Program is the most appropriate place to unlock the Laplace seal.”

Frontal said as he stared at the coordinates data indicated on the navigation screen, and no one present disagreed. The coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program—200km away from earth, was in a low-orbit area that could not even be considered space, and it was a location a certain historical relic would pass by every day. There was still a portion of remnants of the Prime Minister’s residence “Laplace” that was crushed 100 year ago floating in low-orbit, become some sort of tourist attraction.

The “Laplace Box” was said to be able to topple the Federation government, and the ghost of “Laplace” continued to float in absolute zero space. Angelo felt that it was stupid to try and link these two together as he thought that it was some bad joke, but gulped his saliva when he felt the chill developing in him. The “La +” coordinates indicated on the screen did not say anything as it let the blood-like crimson red sign continue to flicker.

Chapter 2

Part 1

Universal Century 0079, January 10th. On this day, the sky fell. A space colony fell onto Earth through the hands of the Principality of Zeon Army.

This time, the segment in this Operation British was named " Colony Drop" as they planned to compare the fate of the Earth Federation to the hegemonic countries in the old ages. This space colony that fell on Earth was the initial resolution since the declaration of war that occurred on the 3rd day of the same month. After merely 3 seconds since they declared war, the Principalities army, which had already gotten into position beforehand, attacked at the same time and immediately destroyed 3 sides. The Federation army panicked due to this sudden raid, and started gathering their forces quickly; the Principality coolly observed this in their rear sight as it started moving the space colony, its own " bomb".

The colony that was built on Lagrange Point, located at a gravity balance between Earth and the Moon, and once the orbital speed decreased slightly, it would leave the original gravity equilibrium point. The Principality installed nuclear pulse engines on the Side 2 "Island Iffish", which they chose as the bomb. After several hours of burst flares, the space colony ended up leaving its original orbit and started freefalling on its own.

The space colony that became a prisoner of gravity took more than 5 days to orbit half a round around the moon and fall onto Earth. Logically, the Federation exerted all its forces to prevent this situation, but they could not defeat the Principality of Zeon army that followed the colony. The Federation did not know of the existence of mobile suits at that time, nor did it know of the tactical usage of Minovsky Particles in combat, and its 3-to-1 superiority in numbers were of no use.

With the one-eyed "Zakus" accompanying, the large mass of the colony approached the atmosphere. It would not be difficult to make a 30km long metal cylinder 6km long break the through atmosphere together with the 3 large mirrors on it. The burning heat of the friction would cause the colony to be so hot that it would become a massive fireball, causing the atmosphere to take a hit it had never experienced before. The peeled outer wall would become a burning meteor shower, and the colony itself followed a black pressurized smokescreen that covered the sky, marking its trail of destruction.

The fortunate thing for the Federation army was that the colony was worn out somewhat due to the skirmishes that occurred for several days. The initial estimates were that the colony would hit the headquarters at Jaburo located in South America, but it split in the air soon after it entered the atmosphere above Africa. The colony broke into 3 blocks, one hit Australia, one hit the Pacific Ocean, and the last one hit North America. In terms of the results, Jaburo managed to avoid a calamity here, and the Federation

managed to protect its headquarters that would end up leading the counterattack, but the tragedy of having a colony crash into Earth was not something that could be simply negated.

The colony became a massive bomb, and it was said that the power was around 200 times the power of a nuclear weapon that turned a city in Japan into a sea of fire—the atomic bomb that detonated in the city of Hiroshima. Amongst the 3 broken pieces, the largest piece landed in Australia, and it crashed into Sydney at the speed of 11km per second. The sight of the colony falling down as it covered the sky was taken with cameras from neighboring cities, and the people of the later generations learnt of that 'sky is falling' instant of horror. It crashed, causing an impact that caused Sydney to disappear immediately. This impact caused Sydney to disappear immediately, created a crater 10km thick, caused an unprecedentedly large 9.5 magnitude earthquake, and this was just the start. This large earthquake left an observed magnitude of 9.0, rocked the entire continent of Australia, and the magma movement in the orogeny caused the landscape on the eastern coast to change drastically. One-sixteenth of Australia was submerged in the sea, and another one-third of the land took a devastating hit. However, this was just part of the damage caused by the fall of the colony. Besides, right at the moment the colony fell, the Earth's rotation was affected, and it revolved 0.1, 0.2 seconds faster every hour.

The North American continent did not end up in such a ground-changing situation like the continent of Australia, but one quarter of the land was wrecked. The part that dropped into the Pacific Ocean triggered a large tsunami, and even the shores off the Indian Ocean suffered utter devastation. The colony pieces that

fell through the atmosphere caused impacts that resonated with the tsunami, creating a large-scale storm that rocked the entire world for the first time, sending the residents on Earth into chaos. If there were an end of the world, this would be the scene.

The storm and tsunamis covered the lands on Earth for a week, and the abnormal weather did not subside for 6 years after that. The temperature in the colder Southern regions rose up because of this calamity, and not only did it cause sea level to rise, but also, the air pressure changes due to the sea currents caused desertification in humid regions. Disease outbreaks and riots caused by the refugees continued for several years after the war. There was a saying that almost 2 billion people died and were missing, but actually, they could not determine the actual numbers .

A week passed since the start of the war on the 3rd. The One Week Battle got Zeon's war for independence off to a rumbling start, and despite failing in their intent of bombing Jaburo itself, it allowed the Principalities army to continue the war for one year. After that, the largest fleet battle in human history, the battle of Loum occurred as the Principality launched a large-scale invasion to Earth. They used the Earth military headquarters located in New York City, North America, and gradually expanded its territory.

The smoke rose into the atmosphere, and descended onto the ground in the form of a meteor shower. The ones that landed on the Earth with authority were the giants with one eye, and it was not hard to imagine what sort of impression the residents on Earth had as a result. These demons that had different views and values

were invading Earth—and the devastation they brought about was not something the people born on Earth could imagine. In that sense, the people on Earth viewed this army that was attacking their homeland as 'aliens'.

In terms of national power, the difference between the Principality of Zeon and the Federation was approximately a thousand times, and the options Zeon could choose were limited. The citizen policy was part of the Space Migration plan, the Spacenoids' plea for Self-governance was crushed by the Federation, and the people who were moved lived tough lives. These were facts, but despite the room for empathy, the fact would remain in history that Zeon was the most brutal killing organization.

After the war, the remnants of Zeon continued to carry out colony drops. 3 years ago, the "5th Luna" that was used as a mining asteroid was dropped onto Lhasa in Tibet, destroying the capital of the Federation as they planned. The tragedy brought about by this atrocity was deeply etched within the people of Earth , and the Spacenoids' views and stand were all blurred. At this point, as countless debris particles remained in space, the Earth's sky that was showing the bloody-colored sun setting in the West—

The lush trees covered their heads from above, blocking off the clouds and sky floating above.

The trees that grew down the road had their branches reached out, and the density even caused the green leaves to grow onto the lane. The green corridor that was extended without an end in sight looked so dazzling, and Mineva put her face at the car window,

observing the scenery outside. The ones with white and pink flowers were Dogwood, and were the vines growing off the mistletoe Kudzu? Despite the scars of the colony drop in the sky above, this place still had the vegetation exclusive to Southern USA. Due to the warm climate and the creek flowing down the gradual lowlands, the flowers obtained lots of humidity, and looked extremely lively under the sunlight.

It had been one and a half hours since the disease prevention checks were done at the Atlanta Naval Air Station, and Mineva was sitting on this limousine-type electric car. There were still vestiges of war everywhere, the streets of Atlanta still showed scenes of a metropolis, but these were scenes that were seen a long time ago. At this point, what was shown in front of Mineva was a snaking narrow lane within the forest. They passed through the lowlands surrounded by maize fields, and did not see any car moving in the opposite direction. The sparsely scattered farms and houses disappeared. Most likely, this might be the private land space the Marcenas' owned. Mineva imagined the lush and thick green trees as a wal indicating a boundary, and glanced at Riddhe' s face as he sat right beside him.

Riddhe was looking in front silently, not looking at the greenery passing by outside the window. He was about as silent as the time when he piloted the "Delta Plus" into the atmosphere—no, he might be a lot more tense here. Sitting diagonally in front of him was Ronan, who had his mouth shut, not intending to look away from the notebook terminal. As for what they actually talked about on the limousine, there were only two lines, "Mom?" "She's in a Nursing Home in Switzerland." What was left was the heavy and unbearable silence passing between them.

This situation did not allow for anyone to talk easily, and Mineva understood that Riddhe never wanted to face his 'family', but this situation she was facing caused her to feel that it would be easier if these two men were unrelated people. *What is with this weird depressed silence?* Once they entered society, they noticed each other's flaws more than strangers did, and could only create a divide between each other. *Is the relationship between father and son like this?* To Mineva, who lost her parents before she was mature enough, this was something she could not understand, and she held her sigh as she looked outside the window. The green corridor faded in thickness, everything from the green pastures that grew on the other side of the oak trees onwards could be seen, and the large Tudor-styled mansion entered everyone's sights.

The entrance, which was decorated with Corinth-styled ornaments, had a Greek temple-like style, and the main house, which had three-storey buildings connected to it on the side, looked rather similar to the Vist Foundation residence seen on the "Magallanica". Both houses gave off the feel of age, radiating a sense of existence that was basically similar to Zeon's vintage style, but one had to wonder what was with this cold air surrounding this house. This house did not look like it would waver as it remained rooted amidst this damp land, and it looked like it was giving silent threats without trying to hide or show off the special authority of those living in it, wanting outsiders to lower their heads. Mineva suddenly felt a chill up her body that was still not used to the 1G gravity, and grabbed her hands that were cupped in front of her chest under her blouse tightly.

There was no concern for Spacenoids, whether it was the house that was stubbornly protecting the old century traditions or the people with special authority living inside. There was no place for understanding each other—

"Do you know the story of "Gone with the Wind"?"

Riddhe suddenly spoke up, and Mineva nodded without thinking through properly. Mineva herself had not read that book, but she knew that it was one of the classic books during the Middle Ages, and was even rewritten as a movie. Riddhe looked outside the window and explained to Mineva, "This stretch is the stage for that story. Warm climate, fertile land, a very rich farm owner; this prosperity was supported by the black slaves captured and brought in from Africa.

Ronan lifted his face slightly from the notebook, and turned his eyes that were looking through the reading glasses over, but Riddhe's face that was facing the window remained unmoved as he said with a self-mocking self, "What an irony, isn't it?"

"The ones who started the space migration administration, the Chief Senator for the migration issue committee would actually live in Southern USA that relied on slaves."

The prosperity and revival in this place was created through the resources squeezed out from the Spacenoids—this sarcastic line even children could understand caused the atmosphere in the limousine to become heavier, and Riddhe did not look at Ronan as he shut up. Ronan let out what seemed like a sigh from his nose,

and turned his face back to the notebook. Mineva looked back and forth at these two men, and again felt that she had no refuge as she looked at the Western sky that was starting to become red.

The limousine passed through the gate located between the oak trees and drove right into the courtyard of the residence. At the same time, the sound of the rotor could be heard from above, and the helicopters flying in the air reached Mineva's sights. There was no reason for them to return back to base, and the helicopters were waiting if there were any Neo Zeon strike teams around with the intent to snatch her back, so the likelihood was that they would be patrolling through the night. There were armed helicopters with gun turrets pointing out, and several guards lurking around—*All for the sake of receiving me, an anomaly.* Mineva felt a killing intent radiating out from the forest as looked up at the Marcenas' residence that was right in front of her. The triangular roof at the entrance had a bird-ornament, and it took her a little while to realize that it was an authentic black condor.

Part 2

The quality of servants would determine what the family was made of. In this case, the fact that a servant would arrive at the carpark to invite them in proved that the Marcenas' stature was for real.

"Welcome back." Riddhe saw the old butler who greeted him, and answered, "It's been a while, Dwiyon.", and he, whose face had been tense ever since he reached Earth, finally relaxed somewhat at this moment. The butler called Dwiyon here merely lowered his head for a short while, and though it was hard to see

his expression, even Mineva could sense a surge of emotions swelling from his trembling shoulders. It was common to see many servants who act tough with power backing them up, but there were not many servants who would weep earnestly for the family members they were serving. He was definitely feeling emotional, but he would not try to inquire about his master's private life on his own, could maintain some form of distance with the family he was serving while doing so obediently, and the magnetism working between them was one only a high-class family would have with a top-notch butler.

After passing through the arched entrance, there was a large empty hall that could be seen, and the sunlight that shone in diagonally from the second level window was reflected off the clean and polished floor. Like its outer appearance, the inside arrangement of the house and the width was not too different from the Vist's mansion. Mineva's official residence was basically no different from a palace despite being raised in a fortress full of defeated warriors, and this current situation did not intimidate her , but the aged pillared, walls, furniture and all sorts of things still produced an aura that would discourage anyone.

Unlike the old yet grimy looking Vist Foundation, everything in this place reeked of its own history, giving a suffocating feeling that was resisting change. Riddhe, who grew up in this family, most probably experienced this feeling. Mineva shook off this air that filled the space, and did not land her sights on anything as she merely followed the back profiles of those heading in. She turned to the hall located on the left side, past a table that could seat 10 people in the dining room, and arrived at the corridor leading to the inside of the house. It was an art gallery with paintings

decorating the corridor, and with the varying light intensity lighting the paintings, the fine artworks could be mistaken for photos as they were lined up, awaiting visitors.

Mineva stared at the first portrait, and stopped. The person in this portrait seemed to be of mixed blood, and he had brown eyes that were half-passionate, half-rational. It was a man who looked like he was in his sixties. Mineva did see this face several times in history class, but after looking at it closely again, she found that he resembled Riddhe somewhat, “This person is Ricardo Marcenas, the first Prime Minister of the Federation government.” Ronan explained, and Mineva continued to look up at that painting silently.

"The one over there would be the 3rd Prime Minister, Georges Marcenas, my great-grandfather. He would be called Ricardo Junior in movies or books based on historic themes."

Ronan smiled slightly as he pointed at the paintings lined down the corridor with his eyes, introducing them one by one, "The first Prime Minister, Ricardo Marcenas, was unfortunately assassinated , but the Marcenas family continued to maintain important positions inside the government. The history within the Earth Federation government is also our family history. Our family's fate is to become the pillars supporting the country…I suppose you can say that."

There was no sense of conceit or deliberation in these words as his voice merely described the cold hard facts calmly. There was a chill that arose suddenly in this dim corridor, and Mineva trembled as she saw these paintings that could not talk, understanding where the pressure in this house came from.

The ancestors of the Marcenas' family were lined up on this empty hall, depicting the history of the Federation. These were the people, the group of guardians for the Federation, becoming tense because of her intrusion as a foreigner. They were glaring at the forgotten remnant of the enemy, pressurizing her with a hatred-like surge—

"They managed to survive till now doing that kind of job."

Riddhe spoke. Mineva recovered and looked at him.

"The culprit that blew up the first Prime Minister's residence was said to be a separatist against the Federation's rule, but nobody knew the truth. Some people said that the mastermind behind this were the conservatives in the government, thinking that the liberal and idealistic Prime Minister will get in the way. This is the same reason why a certain American president in the Middle Ages was assassinated."

Riddhe looked up at the paintings, showing a look of disgust on the side of his face. As a descendant of this family and a son who deserted his family, he seemed to be exerting his presence in this corridor of time. He ignored Ronan, who went silent, and continued with a stiff voice,

"The terrorist attack that caused the explosion of the official residence…that "Laplace Incident" was a good excuse for the Federation to sweep the separatists. At that time, the call was basically, "remember the tragedy of Laplace. Never ever forgive those despicable terrorists". The pitiful separatists were immediately eliminated, and the Federation government quelled the conflicts on Earth. During that time, what did our Marcenas family do? We relied on the conservatives who killed the first Prime Minister, preventing our entire family from being wiped out . After the deputy Prime Minister became the second Prime Minister temporarily, Ricardo Junior won an overwhelming support from the people and was elected as the third Prime Minister, and thoroughly eliminated the terrorists, the ones who killed his father. These were all beautiful things that were made up , heroes that were made up. After that, the Marcenas family—…"

"JUST SHUT UP!"

The sharp roar echoed through this corridor of time, stopping Riddhe from continuing what he wanted to say. The paintings held their breaths, staring silently at their descendants. Ronan lowered his cold stare on the silent Riddhe.

"So what you're saying is that the world is run on conspiracies? You read too many nonsensical books. Politics is not that simple, and there are a lot of things you, who abandoned your family, don 't know about."

Riddhe did not say anything as he turned his back on the other person, and his face was definitely looking like a stubborn child. *He's trying to be like a spoilt child to his father, and got told off as a result; the current situation might seem to be like this.* "Miss Mineva" As she continued to ponder aimlessly, Ronan looked at her, and she seemed to panic somewhat as she looked back.

"We will be talking about the details later, but I still have to admire you for the courage you showed. I am willing to bet my personal honor and do all I can to make sure that you are not mistreated."

The sincere yet sharp stare appeared in Ronan's eyes, and this stare caused Mineva to feel a fluttering in her chest. "I am very glad to hear you say that." She responded with a voice appropriate for the occasion and gave a polite smile.

"Let the unfortunate past pass by. I hope for a positive development through our talks, and for this, I will go all out in that."

Mineva wanted to answer back with a smile at that moment, but Ronan suddenly lowered his face and looked away, "However, there is something I hope that you can understand first." Mineva felt a chill.

"The Federation government is definitely not a sturdy rock that will not be destroyed. We, the people of the Marcenas family, have been protecting the Federation for generations and dedicating ourselves to it. It's the same as you, the symbol of Zeon."

But we couldn't do it. Ronan's words had such bitterness, and the emptiness that came as he drew the line caused his heart to turn cold. "Dad…" Riddhe let out a doubtful voice, but Ronan did not look at his face as he merely looked far away at the portraits lined up in the shadows.

"The Federation is still young, less than 150 years old, an immature nation. Someone…someone has to protect it."

Part 3

During the war, the Zeon forces that occupied the land gave up on occupying the Marcenas' residence, so one could tell how much historical value this office had. The office table was used since previous generations, of the same age as the custom made bookcase, and they had been around for at least a century. The chandelier that dropped during the colony drop still remained hanging on the ceiling, glowing as they went all out to find similar parts of similar age.

The office and the linked study seemed like a mysterious space filled with the world's secrets to children—*is this room this big?* Riddhe looked around the room that was 7m wide, was shocked by the difference in the room from his previous memories, and recalled and yes, he was definitely unfamiliar with the office to such a degree. Making this conclusion, he gave a wry smile.

He entered the office a few times when he was young, and even sat on his father's lap, hearing stories about the greatness of their ancestors, but at some point, he did not want to approach his place . One of the reasons was that he grew old enough not to sit on other people's laps, and another was that his father, who inherited the land from Riddhe's grandfather, started to get busy as a High-ranking Senator as he rushed about. However, the biggest reason was that his father always took action according to his schedule, and excluded Riddhe and the family from his business.

He basically spends an entire year at Dakar's Senate Council, and whenever he returns home, he has to go all over the place, securing a group of people who will support him, process through petitions, attend parties for consecutive days or go on a trip for leisure. To this Senate Council member who invested in several funds and had to take care of several family enterprises, this family is just a guarantee for the world to judge him by. The reason why dad willing to receive Mineva and me is just… As he thought about that, Riddhe felt his mind start to agitate again, and he shook it lightly to remove these useless thoughts.

Calm down. Riddhe told himself as he suppressed this urge, sitting down on the sofa that was used to invite visitors in. He

finally managed to make it all the way here, only to start butting at his father rudely, causing him to have a worse standing. Instead of letting the scandals about the family rise to the surface, his father would first act calmly and determine whether there was any political value—and this was planned right from the beginning. It was because Riddhe knew that he had such a personality that he planned this as insurance. He knew that he had no right to feel frustrated about the mood in this family, and that he did not have the right to criticize his father. At this point, even Riddhe himself had been relying on his family's tradition of trying to secure political relations to do this.

It was 4.30pm, and Mineva was resting in the guest room. His father, who told him to wait in this office, was probably talking with the army and the Council, and they would most likely come up with countermeasures against this neutral agreement. At this point, he first had to secure Mineva's safety and talk about the plans the Senate Council plotted to do with the "Laplace Box". The Senate would most likely be activated as soon as possible, and complete measures would be taken to ensure the "Nahel Argama" s safety. Riddhe continued to reflect upon this as he pondered about how he should respond. At this moment, an abrupt knock on the door caused him to jerk his shoulders.

There was no reason for dad to knock on the door first. By the time Riddhe thought about this, "Please excuse me" Dwiyon had already opened the door. His thoroughly polished leather shoes moved on the carpet silently, and he put the coffee cup onto the reception table. Riddhe smelled the aroma of the coffee from the pot, and he looked up and this old butler who was a fatherly figure to him. "Thank you." Riddhe said, and Dwiyon lowered his

head that had neatly combed white hair, giving a choking voice as he said, “It is really great that you’re alright…”

“Really, you’re sounding like an old man now.”

“I am old now, I am completely old. Don’t you know how much the master was so worried about you this time…”

“Dad?”

“Of course, since the son is a pilot in the army. Even I would worry whenever I hear any uproars on the news.”

Dwiyon took off his glasses and used his handkerchief to quickly wipe the corners of his glasses. “You’re exaggerating it there!” Despite saying that, Riddhe could not feel calm now that someone talked about these past three years he had not talked about, and sipped his coffee to avoid talking more about this. “ Really?” Dwiyon’s wrinkled face was reddening somewhat.

“Young master Riddhe, I’ll just say this to you here. The master isn’t in good health.”

“…Heart issues?”

“Yeah. I think it’s because he was reassigned to Dakar or something that he had not rested well for three years…young master Riddhe, I will not live for much longer, so can you please return to the house?”

These were words Riddhe did not expect. He used his hands to adjust the collar on his uniform and deliberately avoided Dwiyon's slightly hot eyes.

"I know I've crossed the line with this kind of request, but this old me will like to request this from you. Please help the master—"

"So the son who went on the run is back?"

A completely different voice suddenly rang inside the room, causing Riddhe and Dwiyon to turn to the door at the same time. That woman with a nice clean cut of blond hair had her hand on the door that was pushed opened, giving a mischievous smile on her face.

"Sis…! You're here too?"

"Of course. Unlike a certain person, I do treat this place as my home."

Cynthia Marcenas answered with a tone that was that was hard to determine if there were any signs of cynicism as she walked into the office. She glanced at Dwiyon, who quickly backed away, and sat on the sofa, causing Riddhe, who stood up as well, to sit back. " Come here. Let me see your face." She said as she used both hands to grab onto Riddhe's head. This person who appeared in from of Riddhe, had a nice figure, a natural flair to brighten the mood just by showing up, and it was definitely Riddhe's sister who was older than him by 6 years. "Oh? You seem a little bonier compared to before!" Cynthia said, and Riddhe answered, "You too, sis, you

feel like a madam of the leisure class now." Half of this was Riddhe honest opinion, and half of it was a reminiscent of the past as he looked away from the face in front of him.

Ever since young, Cynthia had been hailed as a talent of beauty and wits, and was recognized to be a flower in the social class, both internally and externally. On the other hand, she was the owner of a strict and advanced work ethic. Ever since she was a student, she started obtaining all sorts of licenses, and though the people around her kept saying that she was not someone who would stay inside the house quietly, this rich daughter defied all expectations after graduation and simply agreed to the arranged marriage her father made for her. To quote her, "I proved that I can do it, so I'm happy." But naturally, it was not that easy to think that a woman would willingly give up so many options she could choose in her life and plunge into the world of kinship. It was unknown if the world of politics poisoned Cynthia's mother as she kept spending her life in her own house or the nursing home for wrong reasons, and Cynthia herself felt repulsed that her mother could not fulfill the role of a wife and a mother. Having experienced a youthful period where she was flattered because of her name and her appearance, this big sister's melancholy and rebellious nature became even more rooted. However, though this was a result of the above mentioned descriptions, Cynthia was a woman who did not change as she kept her free and vibrant nature within.

The reason why Riddhe could leave the house was because his sister and brother-in-law took up a stronger sense of existence as supporting pillars. Cynthia was wearing a ladies' suit, had make-up on her face and the aroma of perfume on her. She had

completely become a woman of the Marcenas' family, and to Riddhe, who ran away from home, it was unknown of his sister's existence was dazzling or lonely. Anyway, Riddhe really could not bring himself to face the other person. Cynthia stared at her brother's anxious face and said sharply, "Dwiyon begged for you to come back, right? Back home."

"You heard about it?"

"As I thought. Bullseye."

As Cynthia snickered, Dwiyon gave a terrified look behind her. *Does this mean that dad is feeling so weak that Cynthia can randomly guess what Dwiyon said?* Riddhe felt a chill entering his chest. "But Riddhe, can you consider?" Cynthia followed up, causing him to clench his hands that were resting on the knees.

"Speaking of succession, isn't brother-in-law Patrick learning? I heard that he's going to take part in a local election…"

"Yeah, I'm here to prepare for that too. I have to stand on the same side as hubby. However, even if Patrick was married in, he's still not a Marcenas."

Cynthia concluded, and one could imagine her father's impression overlapping with her existence. "It's unexpected that you would say that…" Riddhe stood up, and Cynthia shrugged, saying, "Once I got into the world of politics, I ended up like that even if I don't want to!"

"Dad won't say that because of his personality, but he really wished for this. If we let Patrick take over the family's tradition, there will be mixed blood in the terrain the Marcenas' family protected for more than a hundred years. To be honest, Patrick isn' t the type to be a politician. If you're willing to come back…"

"I'M NOT MADE FOR IT EITHER!"

The atmosphere inside the house, the shadow of that unpleasant feeling will fall on me. Riddhe let out a loud and clear voice as he brought his face to Cynthia.

"If we can let new blood take over, the atmosphere in the house will change. Don't you hate this gloomy presence too, sis…?"

Of course, Riddhe did not understand what Cynthia was trying to say. His brother-in-law was the second son of a very influential local entrepreneur, and at this point, he was married into the Marcenas' family, becoming the first secretary of her father. He had very little relation with the term 'ambition', and when talking about competition, this brother-in-law would be akin to taking part in a sports competition; no matter good or bad, he would always be a Mr. Nice Guy. Riddhe knew that his brother-in-law's harmless nature was suitable for marrying, but he understood that he was not suited to be a successor of a politician family, and that Riddhe himself ran away from home even after knowing this without warning. Such unexpected developments probably caused the stress on his father's heart to increase, but what could Riddhe do? Even his older sister, who used to be a very carefree person, was infected by this atmosphere, and naturally, she would start to

talk about tradition and bloodline. Riddhe could not cope with this gloomy atmosphere at all.

Suddenly, Cynthia showed a grin and patted Riddhe on the head, saying, "You haven't changed at all~" but while Riddhe could hear the warmth of his relative, he could only feel pain in his heart, and he, who was unable to look at his sister, turned to look at the floor.

"May I ask who that girl is?"

"Eh?"

"I'm talking about the girl you brought back. She's cute, isn't she? Who is she?"

This second unexpected occurrence caused his heart to beat hard. Neither Cynthia nor Dwiyon knew of the reason why Riddhe returned home this time, and they did not notice what the many stares surrounding the house and the sounds of the helicopters rotors spinning from afar meant. "Ah, she's…Audrey Burne!" Riddhe immediately answered.

"She's the daughter of the largest stakeholder in Anaheim. I met her on the ship viewing ceremony…"

"Burne? I never heard of that name before."

Cynthia tilted her head that should have memorized the hundreds of investors' names as she frowned for just a moment, only to give a smile immediately afterwards. "Well, I'll look

forward to investigating what relationship you two have later on. Will you be staying here tonight?"

"Yeah…"

"I'll call in those ladies in for a dinner party. Do attend this party with Miss Audrey too."

"I don't have any clothing that can be worn for a party."

"I will lend Miss Audrey something to wear. As for you, that uniform is okay. It will excite those free madams>"

Cynthia used her finger to poke at the mobile suit emblem on Riddhe's chest, and turned to Dwiyon, "I'll leave it to you then, Dwiyon." who responded with a smile, "Alright, I will tell the cook to work harder than usual today." and lowered his slightly grimacing face.

"If the lady was around, this family will finally gather at the dining table…"

Such saddening words caused Cynthia to reveal a bitter smile as well. *No matter how I try to resist, the many years I used to spend here with my family won't change, right?* Riddhe's sights first turned to the window where the sunlight shone in, and then listlessly looked over at the family photo hanging on the wall as a decoration. After that, a voice rang amongst the crowd, "It's a bliss that she's not here", causing Riddhe to freeze up.

"If she knows of the commotion here, the illness that could be healed will never heal."

That man walked through the door that was ajar, not looking at the other people as he went right to the office table. Riddhe felt his relaxed chest tighten at that moment and readjusted himself to face his father. Cynthia glanced back and forth between the two of them, and asked "What does this mean" as she got up from the sofa. Ronan however looked over her shoulder and stared at his own secretary.

"I'll explain later…Patrick, I'll leave it to you."

Patrick, who was standing at the door, heard Ronan call for him as he answered "Yes" with a sullen expression. It seemed that someone explained what was going on to his brother-in-law Patrick, who in turn turned his head over to Riddhe, raised his hand slightly, showed an awkward smile which was the most he could do at this point, and then turned to Cynthia. "Then.." Cynthia seemed to realize the strangely tense tone in her husband' s prompting voice, and she gave a look back while leaving.

The grimness within the room increased. The sound of the telephone, the footsteps of the secretary, the murmurs from Dakar seeped into this house, and the feeling continued to spread in waves that appeared vaguely. *It's because I hate this feeling that I can' t stay in this house.* Riddhe realized this again, and accepted that he was the source of this tremor here as he continued to stare at his father silently. "Let us be alone for a while. Leave any urgent matters with Patrick." Ronan instructed Dwiyon and returned to

the table. “I understand, Dwiyon answered and retreated from the room. The sound of the door being closed was left behind, and the two of them were inside the office, surrounded by this suffocating silence.

“I never thought I would face you in such a situation.”

Ronan broke this silence and sighed as he spoke. Riddhe hid his shock that the initiative was taken, and answered, “I had been running away all this time.” He clicked his tongue secretly when he realized that he accidentally butted back at his father. *Calm down, he’s a Senate Council member who can deal with the army that will suck up to him. I have to put aside all personal feelings and tell him.* Riddhe felt the pressure in his heart as he muttered, and he turned his back at the window to face Ronan.

“Since I entered the army with the family’s objection, I never intended to come back, but just once, I have to do this. You’ve heard of the terrorist attack on “Industrial 7”, right? I was there too . That incident was not like what the news reported –”

“This is not what I want to talk about.”

Ronan forcefully interrupted and stared right at Riddhe. His face showed neither anger nor disdain as he lowered his expression that would depress anyone at this point. “That is not all I want to talk about…” At that moment, Riddhe felt that the floor around him collapsed as his clenched fists were trembling.

“I was shocked when I received your mail. Indeed, you got involved with the “Box”…”

The term "Box" pierced through Riddhe's heart, and he felt that what he should be saying was dissolved. Ronan leaned back on the leather chair as he looked up, seemingly at the sky, and closed his eyes.

"Even though I tried to arrange for you to withdraw immediately, it ended up like this in the end…I guess this in fact is a curse, and that you are still a Marcenas."

Riddhe did not understand what his father was talking about, and he was not really certain of who exactly he was talking to. " Dad…" Riddhe muttered with a hoarse voice, and Ronan took a deep breath, straightened his back from the back of the chair, saying,

"Riddhe, you need to know the truth."

He stared right at Riddhe's eyes, and said with a voice that did not allow for any words. His expression was covered by the shadows as his back faced the red sunset.

"For generations, this truth is only passed on to a direct son of the Marcenas family. Neither your uncles, aunts, Cynthia nor Patrick knew about this. I thought that I wouldn't have to tell you this if you took a different path…but since things ended up like this, there is no other way for you to survive."

Riddhe could not move his body. He wanted to treat these words as a joke, but he, who somewhat expected it, did not allow himself to do so. He realized that this was not just a political stench, and he definitely felt some sort of taboo existing. *Right, that*

's why I ran away from home. The curse inflicted on the family is brewing gradually, and, inside this family that is giving off an ominous vibe, there 's some sort of—

"Save us."

Ronan muttered as he clasped his hands together, bringing them to his forehead. He was not saying this to God, and after leading off with these words that were not a sentence, he started to tell the true. That story depicted the confession of a man who lost a god that could have saved him right from the beginning—and the causality of how a family was destined to become god slayers.

Part 4

"I HATE IT!"

As the yell echoed through the room, the sound of the teacup and the saucer clashing with each other echoed throughout the captain's room. While sitting opposite the stunned and blinking Otto, Commander Daguza said calmly, "I am not making a request to you here."

"Our ship will reach the space coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program. If you activate the "Unicorn" there, there might be a possibility that a new Program will be unsealed. I will be riding with you, and I hope that you will pilot the "Unicorn" to the designated coordinates. This is an order."

Daguza said without twitching his eyebrows, and beside him, Lieutenant Conroy too gave a stare that did not allow any

arguments. It was several minutes since Banagher was taken away from Takuya and Micott and brought to the captain's room. Banagher did not even have the luxury to taste the red tea the captain prided himself in before he made this request. They indicated that they had to look for the "Box" on their trip back, and Banagher had to pilot the "Unicorn" to assist with the investigations. Banagher looked over at the face of the captain who was pouring the red tea, and then turned to the ECOAS commander who gave a robotic expression, before arguing, "Why must I do such a thing?"

"Looking at the current situation, you're the only one who can pilot the "Unicorn"."

"If it's just about bringing back something, can't you just let another mobile suit do the job?"

"The system won't be able to identify if the main generator is not activated. The pilot has to be in it."

After sealing off one argument after another, Daguza asked back, "Any other questions?" as he gave a probing stare that seemed to read into the other person's thoughts. Banagher looked away as he answered, "You saw it too right? What that machine did on "Palau"…"

"Whenever I ride on it, I just feel weird. I don't believe that I can pilot it well, and I don't want to ride on it."

"But you came back safely. You managed to stop that 4-winged from resisting, capturing both the machine and the pilot. That was

quite a lot of military gains." "MILITARY GAINS!? YOU CALL THAT MILITARY GAINS!?" *That silver needle of the syringe was glowing when it poked into Marida's numb skin.* Marida felt a pain from that instant as he inadvertently yelled, but Daguza, who was beside him, continued to remain calm as he gave Banagher an unwavering stare, asking properly, "What should I call it?"

"Asking me…anyway, I had enough. I'm not a soldier, so I don' t have a duty to listen to your orders!"

"It's true that you do not have a duty, but you have a responsibility."

These unexpected words pierced through Banagher's heart, causing his body to sway for a while. After Banagher looked up, Otto and Conroy looked like they were blindsided as they stared at Daguza.

"You've interfered with battle 3 times already, and you're the pilot of what they call a powerful weapon, the "Unicorn". If some are to be saved by it, others will obviously perish. You have already interfered with many people's fates, so you have to bear this responsibility."

These were words Banagher had never thought of before. " What must I do…?" Banagher asked, and Daguza gave a straightforward look as he answered, "See things till the end."

"And when is the end? Are you telling me to fight till death? Or are you going to get me to play this unreasonable treasure hunt?"

"That's something for you to think about. Right now, you're just thinking of running away from the trouble in front of you."

Banagher felt a sharp pain in his chest, perhaps because deep inside him, he too felt that the other person was spot on in some way. This was not something he could admit simply, and he lowered his stare onto the red tea, asking softly without heart, "Mr Daguza…have you never doubted?"

"You're always calm, not shaken at all…I really can't be like tyou."

Banagher did not intend to be sarcastic at the other person. By relying on a knife-sharp moral courage, he had to move even if he was forced to accept the coincidental outcome. Leaving aside whether Banagher wanted to become such a person, he felt that it would be easier for such a person to take action; that Daguza should simply be a pilot, and the "Unicorn Gundam" could display its capabilities to its maximum. *I'm not confident in anything , I can't distinguish between ally and enemy, I have no right to wield a weapon.* He did not feel that he wanted to wield a weapon again—even if it meant disappointing Cardeas, his father.

Daguza raised his eyelids slightly as he showed signs of swallowing words. Banagher, who had expected a determined argument at this point, secretly glanced at his face amidst this unnatural silence. Conroy merely looked at his silent commander's face, and then turned to look at Banagher, saying, "On the battlefield, doubting will lead to death."

"That's why we can only think of executing our missions. The leader has to carry out the responsibility he should bear. This would be the responsibility I am referring to."

"But will people die because of it? What kind of responsibility is it that I have to start killing!? I can't be like you in that I can simply sort out such things so clearly…"

Mission, duty, responsibility, both Federation and Neo Zeon had them, and both sides could explain it as justice. Banagher had nobody to rely on emotionally, but he felt that he would probably collapse due to fear if he merely remained silent, and such emotions caused him to roar out what he wanted to say. "Do you think it's that simple!" Conroy yelled out as he was about to get up , his hulking figure nearly knocking into the table. Before Otto could restrain him, Daguza held back Conroy "Everyone has their own way to take responsibility." and argued back with a calm voice.

"Right now, your situation is easy to understand. The things you should be responsible for are right in front of you. I am talking about those classmates of yours."

That moment of hesitation had disappeared completely as Daguza continued with a calm voice. Banagher felt blindsided by the discussion of this weakness as he eked out a voice to confirm, " Are you talking about Takuya and Micott…?"

"Even if they return back to "Luna II" their predicaments are rather delicate. How they will be dealt with will determine on our

reports and testimonies. The only thing that will sway this will be your actions."

"You're going to use hostages again…?"

"You can interpret it however you want. You are in a position to change their fates, so it's best that you understand this well and choose what to do next."

Daguza finished what he wanted to say and got up, while Conroy followed him from behind. Their firm muscles could be seen fleshed out beneath their uniforms, and their back profiles turned to leave the Captain's room. Banagher let out an accumulated sigh and clasped his hands together. "Well, don't hate them there." Otto, who reached for the teacup, concluded.

"They can only say that in their positions anyway. Also, Commander Daguza isn't an emotionless robot like what you think, you know?"

He brought the red tea to his mouth and continued. Banagher lifted his head slightly to look at the other person's face.

"When we were commanded to attack "Palau" with a single ship…to be honest, all I saw was darkness in front of him. But Commander Daguza did say that he viewed the operation as a hostage rescue."

He did not understand what the other man was talking about. Otto smiled at the frowning Banagher and said, "You're the hostage."

"We owe you a favor…he said this before. If not for Commander Daguza's inspiration and idea, we wouldn't know what would have happened. I won't tell you to thank you, but at least recognize him for what he did, will you? People have responsibilities they have to bear, and Commander Daguza had been facing this seriously all the time."

Otto seemed to be saying this to himself as well as he put the teacup back onto the saucer. Banagher could not think of anything to answer at that moment as he lowered his head again.

"How can I not doubt? It's not like I made this detour because I like it, and I don't feel that the headquarters' orders are correct. But if I lump these thoughts together, this so-called responsibility will be another thing altogether…"

Part 5

"I got a funny telegram from headquarters. Shall I read it to you ?"

Lieutenant Garrett said as he lifted his ace from the monitor, but as he met the people who arrived in the eyes, he immediately hid his smile. Daguza seemed to have revealed his expression on his face, and to hide the awkwardness of having his subordinate read his thoughts, "Please." he simply muttered and passed through the surveillance room door together with Conroy.

"…Yes. Sender, Space Marine Special Operations Headquarters. Receiver, commander of ECOAS 920 in active service on the " Nahel Argama". Adding on to message 1430. The chances of the

enemy pursuing are very high, ample alertness is recommended. That's all."

Conroy inadvertently grinned, and Daguza could not help but curl his lips up as well. "Such a scary and useful advice." he remarked wryly, and Garrett finally showed a relieved expression.

"To think that they would remind us of something we already knew…what's their intention?"

"Someone must be trying to prevent us from carrying out our investigations. Some certain people must be thinking of bringing the "Nahel Argama" back and let the key to the "Box" fall under the army's management. But if we look at the Senate Council's side , there's no way they can completely ignore the Vist Foundation's order."

"So they sent this meaningless warning and tell us to decide based on the situation?"

"It's just a failsafe. Also, it's an indication that they tried to stop us."

Daguza did feel that it was too much for him to say such things, but Garrett, who shrugged his shoulders, did not seem to mind. Conroy looked at Daguza's expression and interjected, "A telegram's a telegram, so tell those guys from 729 as well!"

"As we planned, the operation will begin at 2300. Can both " Lotos" launch?"

"Yeah. We and the pilots from 729 have started to hear out the instructions for this operation. The Nahel Argama squad will launch 2 ReZELs. The machines are equipped with atmospheric-entry equipment just in case."

"Alright, we don't have much experience with carrying out operations in low orbit. Go listen to the strategy for this operation too so that the squads can coordinate well, Lieutenant."

Eh? Daguza was surprised for a moment as he turned to look at Conroy, but Garrett had already answered "roger!" as he got up from his seat. *Sorry there.* Conroy gave this expression as Garrett slipped by him and walked out of the room that functioned as ECOAS' command room. *Did Conroy detect my mood too?* Daguza felt somewhat awkward and yet thankful for the concern of his old friend as he sighed out a long breath he accumulated since the moment he was in the captain's room. *What kind of responsibility is it that I have to start killing!?*—he recalled the expression and voice that pierced through his chest as he sat on the chair in front of the console.

"The government and the Foundation are duking it out for the " Box"…something definitely stinks here."

Conroy pretended not to notice Daguza's sigh as he poured the coffee and sighed. Daguza himself heard the voice from behind.

"I can understand how Cardeas Vist felt when he wanted to hand the Box to Neo Zeon. Seeing the politicians who only cared about their own well-being and luxury, surrounded by Foundation members who were fighting for their own benefits, he probably

thought about giving everything away. The reason why he chose the "Sleeves" was simply because he wanted to obtain the results from elimination. Amongst everything in the world that's trying to create havoc, only Neo Zeon has the discipline of an army and organizational ability—

"Conroy, do you still remember the operation at "Sweetwater"? "

Daguza interrupted the other person's words and raised another topic. Conroy's hand that was pouring coffee into the mug shuddered, and he remained silent for a while before squeezing out a deep voice, "How can I possibly forget?"

"I've been having nightmares of that even till now, you know. I kept dreaming of the corpses of the kids floating out of the hole in the colony…even though the colony never had a hole blown in it."

Conroy went silent and continued moving his hand that froze. He tried to shake off the memories that immediately rose up in his mind, and there was an urge of anxiety, trying to look to the future coming out from his shoulders. Daguza, who saw the back of that normal suit during that operation from the driver seat of the "Loto ", had that image overlapped on the other man in the room at this point, and the sinister fragments of memories budded in his mind.

To counter the number of refugees that were drastically increasing during the war and after, the Federation set up " Sweetwater" in L2 space. It was a refugee colony hastily formed by connecting an open-type space colony and a closed-type space colony, both of different in structure and diameter. This hastily

built refugee colony had bad living standards, and it could be said to be a slum in space. It would not take too long for this place to become a base for anti-government forces, and during “Char’s Counterattack”. “Sweetwater” became a working base for Neo Zeon. After the conflict ended, the defeated troops formed guerrilla squads, and “Sweetwater” became a breeding ground for terrorist planning, and it was a natural thing for such pus to be tucked away in “Sweetwater”.

The Side Nationalism (Controllism) erupted due to “Char’s Counterattack”, and the Federation naturally hoped that sweeping Neo Zeon would have immediate effects as they tried to seal off the voices calling for Elementalism. These factors caused the Central Intelligence Branch to be unnaturally enthusiastic as they investigated this terrorist activity and sent out ECOAS, which was formed not too long ago as a response. There was an empty building on a land behind a cleaning factory in a certain sector of “ Sweetwater”, and the plotters of the terrorist organization were gathered there. ECOAS launched a raid and destroyed them in one shot. Those terrorists ignored human rights and laws, so their crimes that went beyond the law should be punished by means beyond the law—in order to pass this hidden message from the Federation government to the anti-government forces, they chose to use an extremist option of ‘eliminating’ the building together with the terrorists, so Daguza and the ECOAS 920 members rode on the “Loto” and got onto the outer wall of the colony.

They used beam burners to burn apart the outside wall and invaded the underground service roads in the ground block. They installed bombs on the common passage that should be located together with the building, and planned to use the steam that

would explode from the water tank to destroy the ground, causing the building to collapse as well. The building in question was a desolate place that was planned to be taken down, located alone behind the newly built cleaning factory, so there was no need to worry about whether anyone would approach there in the day. There were Intelligence Branch agents waiting at the space colony, ready to report everything that happened from their surveillance, ready to carry out any backup just in case. They just needed to wait for the masterminds of this terrorist organization to gather at the scene and let some electricity flow through the detonative device. Everything the "Hunters" set up was perfect, and the target terrorists started to gather at the building one after another, causing the ECOAS members to understand that the information they got was correct—except for one exception. A school bus was parked right in front of the abandoned building, and there were many children visiting the factory alighting in front of the entrance .

Once they checked that the last target entered the building, the events happened after the surveillance team withdrew. If the fact that the parking lot was full that day was a coincidence, the fact that the bus was directed to the targeted building was also a coincidence. If there was a need to press on for whom was responsible, it would be the Intelligence Branch's fault for failing to report to the army that there would be a factory visit that day, but in the end, Daguza and his men who were hidden underground would have no reason to know these. The explosion caused the targeted facility, the building to collapse immediately,

and they were then swallowed under the collapsed land. The target was crushed by several tons of concrete, and the school bus was buried under it as well.

Amongst the 37 children present, 30 of them died at that moment, and another 3 died after they were sent to hospital. The remaining 4 who survived miraculously lost some limbs, and suffered damage that could not be erased in their lifetime. One of them still never regained consciousness at this point even after 3 years, and even though that child was braindead, the parents could not give up on their flesh and bone that was still growing. It was said that they would visit the hospital to take care of their child every single day.

The investigation committee concluded that it was an unfortunate accident caused by a aerolite, and the media created a massive report on the tragedy that befell on the young children. In the end, only the management of the colony communal was to bear responsibility, and there were no reports about the men and women inside the building. But on the other hand, related rumors spread around the special forces of the Federation, and ECOAS was dubbed the "Manhunters" after this incident. The Federation sent a strong message with regards to terrorist activities, and gave them fear and hatred that they had never imagined.

They were a hunting force that specialized in killing; they were an organization that did all sorts of dirty work, from assassination and abduction to killing young children—after that, the members of ECOAS saw many missions that should not be spoken of, and were despised by the other soldiers in the army. None of their members could live their lives peacefully ever since then, "It was a

tragedy." Conroy mused, and Daguza inadvertently looked at his back.

"It was a mistake on the Intelligence Branch's part. We couldn't even do anything."

"Yeah."

"We were facing a group of people who would throw either colonies or meteors onto Earth. There might be more children killed if we didn't take them all down in one go."

"Yeah…we have to allow for a little sacrifice for the sake of many."

Daguza forcefully clasped his hands together, and felt like he was biting onto sand as he said, "We're cogs in this large installation called the Federation. Cogs don't wish for anything. They just follow the decision of what the installation wants and carry out the order, until the day they break down due to a fault…"

Daguza suddenly recalled Nasri's face, the commander of ECOAS 729 who led the raid on "Palau" and died with his squad. For the sake of that man and the subordinates who died in that battle, Daguza and his men had to quickly secure the "Box", no matter how much sacrifice they had to make and how much debt they had to bear. Daguza told himself that he never doubted this, and he could not doubt before letting out an exhausted sigh.

Conroy handed him a mug of hot coffee and said silently, "When we complete our mission, all guilt and sacrifices will be forgiven… you said so that time, commander."

"I believe in those words."

So please allow me to continue believing in these words. Conroy's expression was saying this. Daguza brought the mug to his chest and he stared at his face being reflected off the pitch-black surface. Suddenly, he felt a bone-chilling uneasiness, and even felt himself trembling.

There was a face of a man there, who fooled his subordinates, himself, and even forgot that he was fooling others. Do I really want to drink this down? *Whenever my hand stops, the memories would appear, so I still want to continue drinking, so do I want to continue drinking this to escape from this nightmare that will never disappear until my death?—*

"Maybe I'm just trying to run away."

The urge to slam the mug down was released through his mouth in the form of such words. Conroy's eyelids cringed somewhat.

"Up till now, we've been swallowing reality into our stomachs. If we don't swallow, we won't be able to continue on…that guy's different. He wouldn't swallow, he continues to struggle."

He was shaking, but he could still stare right at those eyes that were giving him a doubtful look. Daguza recalled the impression

of those eyes in his mind as he said this. At the same time, Conroy seemed to have the mental impression of those same eyes as he softly uttered, "He's still a kid."

"He sealed himself in a shell because he doesn't want to be hurt. That won't save anyone."

"That might be the case, but to me, I feel that he's the one who's facing reality."

Daguza sensed that Conroy gasped as he looked back silent. He continued to look at the swaying surface of coffee.

"Justice will change according to the times. An existence like us is required to maintain order. Once we swallowed such a reality, we became reality. However…"

Let me ask honestly, what is this order we have to protect even if it means killing children? Nobody can clear or repay the guilt of ending lives that never began the anger the parents felt when they came to cut the nails of their children who will never wake up, because humans were not gods. Everything they did would never be rewarded, and no one will receive salvation. Despite understanding that, I still continue to kill myself off, telling myself consistently that it can't be helped. Won't I become a real cog gradually?

I swallowed reality and sold out myself bit by bit. In this sense, I'm a foolish creature who's sealed in this shell called an adult. Daguza sighed as he looked at his heavy heart, lost in this depressive and silent

time. Conroy closed his eyes and uttered, “I can’t say this can’t be helped” as he gradually tried to stir up something amidst this silence.

“There will always be room for the world to change, and there would be geniuses who would rejected reality and want to change the world. But there is a need for people to bear the time called present and carry on so that these geniuses can think for the future . The ones who have to bear this will be us, uninteresting adults who unfortunately became one with reality.”

Conroy smiled, perhaps laughing at himself for saying something that was not his style. If there were people who would bear this reality and support the world, there would be people who would resist reality and put their hopes on the future they could not see. *Simply put, it’s a question of balance, is it?* Daguza understood at this point and felt somewhat relieved as he finally lifted his head with intent. “Sorry, I understand.” He smiled as he answered, and Conroy shrugged while pretending not to hear anything.

I’ve already done a lot of things most commanders shouldn’t be doing. If I continue this, nobody else will be saying such depressing things, but me. Daguza did not hope to be laughed at by Nasri as he looked away from Conroy and put his fist on his first to invigorate himself . “Also, there’s a problem with what I said.” this sudden voice shocked him.

“What I believe is not what you said, commander, but you yourself. Please take action according to your own thoughts. We’ll follow you from behind.”

Conroy put the mug of coffee he had not drank beside the pot and merely met Daguza in the eyes before walking out from the room. Daguza could not think of what to say as he looked down at the mug he was holding, and faced his reflection off the swaying fluid.

The ripples gradually eased up, and before the image was formed clearly, he immediately gulped the salted coffee that tasted saltier than usual.

Part 6

"A Foundation ship?"

The "Garencieres" bridge seemed more cramped than usual as the large hulking figure of Gael imposed itself, frowning slightly. Zinnerman grabbed onto the backrest of the Captain's seat, let himself turn to the other person while floating in the air, and answered, "Yeah."

"It appeared on the low orbit 20 minutes ago. It's not accelerating, but just exploring around. That "Klimt" is a ship you people used to move art pieces, right?"

Both Flaste and Gilboa were seated on the steering seat and the navigation seat, and in front of them, the "Kilmt" light marker was shown on the radar window. It was moving at a relatively slow speed of 8km per second, and was already about to move a quarter around the Earth. There would be ships moving to and fro every 30 minutes, but not many ships would remain in low orbit like that

. The only ones who would do that would be the maintenance repair ships. Zinnerman did not look away from the silent Gael as he operated the console, and showed the other radar images onto the screen.

"Normally, I won't really care about such things, but this is a different situation itself. If they have a plan to meet someone, this would be that someone."

The navigation management satellite's radar images, which any ship could receive, shrank on the screen, and the image that was enlarged was the enemy search image the "Garencieres" radar caught sight of. The marker of the "Nahel Argama" appeared, and Gael's expression changed. "Hold on", Zinnerman called out the hulking figure that turned slightly and let the magnetic tape on his soles stick onto the floor.

"Where do you intend to go?"

"I said that I'm acting on my own. It doesn't matter to me what the Vist Foundation wants to do."

"In that case, what's causing you to panic?"

"I'm not panicking—"

At the moment he said those words, Gael suddenly went quiet. Zinnerman tapped the automatic pistol at Gael's back and instructed him silently to raise his hands, emphasizing, "Sorry, we're not pursuing the "Nahel Argama" for fun either."

"Tell me what you know. It'll be the end if you refuse."

Zinnerman had no intent of threatening him in the first place. *This man never left the cabin he was assigned to for the past 10 hours or so when he was kept on the ship, and he never intended to say anything, so I guess it's about time to force him to tell the truth. It'll take us less than 2 hours to catch up to the "Mock Trojan Horse"—the "Nahel Argama" as it drifts past the geostationary orbit, and this "Garencieres" will enter low orbit. During this time, this man who used to be a confidante of the Vist Foundation is conspiring with a Foundation ship in front of us. If we can't prove that both parties did not contact each other, we can't let Gael remain on this ship.*

Gael raised both hands and slowly turned to Zinnerman, and he seemed to realize that Flaste, who was sitting on the steering seat, was reaching his hand into his clothes. He exhaled to relieve the killing intent on his lower body, and opened his tightly sealed lips, saying, "that Foundation ship is most likely controlled by Martha Carbine."

"Martha Carbine…you mean that woman who married from the Vist Foundation to the Anaheim Electronics' chairman's family ?"

"That's right, she's Cardeas Vist's own little sister, and right now, she's the substitute leader of the Foundation. She's the first person I should look for revenge."

Gael's straightforward voice pierced through Zinnerman's chest , and made it difficult for him to breath. *So this is what the family scuffle for the "Laplace Box" was about—to prevent the "Box" from being released,* ***the younger sister killed her older brother****."*

"…Is that Martha you're looking for on that ship?"

"No, Martha herself is on the moon. The one on the "Nahel Argama" is the subordinate she raised. The "Klint" was probably chartered to take in those guys."

Gael's infuriated expression of killing intent dispelled all doubts in Zinnerman that it was a conceived lie. He kept his automatic pistol and confirmed, "So, that means that "Gundam" is on board as well?" The "Klimt" was a small ship, but it was still large enough to contain a mobile suit. "Not likely." Gael quickly answered.

"The "Unicorn" is managed under the army. I don't think even Martha can simply get a military resource so easily."

"Even if it's the woman who incited the army to break our deal with Cardeas we're talking about here?"

"If we consider the objective of preventing the "Box" from being released, the Foundation and Federation government do have a common goal. However, the situation is different now. The existence of the "Box" is in doubt, and there are differences

between both sides' thoughts. The Foundation hopes to maintain thing as they are, while the government wants to cash in on the benefits."

These words are easy to understand. The Federation felt that they could get rid of the "Box" that's threatening the government through this chance, but the Vist Foundation didn't want to let go of this benefit they had for 100 years. The ones who can get the "Box" first can decide who would get the benefits in the next generation, and in this sense, the "Box" is really a piece of authentic treasure. As Cardeas said, it has the power to change the future. Both sides are chasing after that thing with bloody eyes , one for the sake of political power, and the other for the sake of economic power to manipulate the Federation army, so the "Nahel Argama" could only move back and forth according to the struggle of power between these two. Our Neo Zeon forces is just playing a sideshow to top it off here. "I see." Zinnerman stroked the beard on his chin.

"Now I understand why that brat launched on his own during that battle in the shoal space region. If they can destroy the " Gundam" that functions as a key, they'll be able to protect the secrets of the "Box". Martha herself planned it."

"That's right. However, that was only a secondary plan. If the " Unicorn" is destroyed, Martha will not be able to know where the "Box" is."

"What's going on? Flaste asked. Gael looked at him "The only ones who know where the "Box" is are the leader Syam Vist and every leader of the foundation."and answered his doubt while reciting like a poem.

"If Martha wants to give a clear signal as to who the real leader is, she must get the "Box"."

As everyone on the bridge went silent, "Of course, I don't know where the "Box" is." Gael quipped. *Let's just believe him. If he knows where the "Box" is, he would be able to threaten Martha more directly.* Zinnerman more or less understood what was going on as he looked up at Gael's face again.

"So it's Martha's instructions for the "Mock Trojan Horse" to move towards the space coordinates?"

"Most likely. She probably intends to obtain information on the "Box" before the "Unicorn" is moved to "Luna II". Now you understand why I'm panicking?"

Gael's expression that was looking back was giving off an anxious look. Zinnerman blinked his eyes as he saw this.

"That ship was deployed here to move Martha's subordinates and the investigation reports here back. If we just wait for the investigations to end leisurely, my chance to take revenge will slip off."

After saying that, Gael turned again. Before he was about to step off the floor, Zinnerman grabbed him by the shoulder, "What do you plan to do alone?" and called him.

"I'm going to get Martha's subordinate and force him to reveal everything she did to the world." Gael shook off the hand grabbing his shoulder and gave Zinnerman a sharp glare. "No

matter whether this will be shot down immediately, this impact will be enough to shoot down Martha from the position of the substitute Foundation leader. I want to end things here as I can't protect my master."

"How are you going to capture her subordinate? Are you going to use the "Eye-Zack" to fight the "Mock Trojan Horse"? It is damaged somewhat, but it is still a battleship in service."

"I have a plan."

Gael said without an expression on his face as he turned away from Zinnerman. "I told you to wait." Zinnerman emphasized as he let his body float to Gael, and then blocked the door.

"In that case, I'll tell you our situation. There's someone else we have to bring back from the "Mock Trojan Horse"."

"Mineva Zabi? If you want her, she's moved away already—"

"No, the one we want back is my subordinate. I want to save that person before our reinforcements meet up."

Zinnerman had already heard the news from the "Rewloola"s telegram that Mineva was brought to Earth. The ship also knew at that moment that Full Frontal, who was onboard the "Rewloola", was approaching. It was obvious what he was planning when he initiated a raid after hearing that Mineva was not on the "Mock Trojan Horse" broke out. Those eyes under the mask could not see the captive Marida. Zinnerman had to save her before the "Mock Trojan Horse" was sunk.

"…I'm listening."

Gael answered after several seconds of looking into the thoughts of the other person's expressions. For a moment, Zinnerman sensed that they were on the same page, and started to focus on the issue at hand as he stared right at Gael's still eyes, saying, "Before that, I'll like to confirm something."

"You said that there is a power amongst the Federation that will try to use this chance to steal the "Box". Who are they?"

Gael gave a look of surprise, and frowned, "They're a group of people fighting with the Foundation and intend to keep the army for their own use. If we use the logic that the enemy of our enemy is our friend, we might be able to make use of them." Zinnerman stared intently as he said, but the other person smirked. "It's impossible." This voice rang within Zinnerman's eardrums.

"Those people have a low opinion of you. Besides, they're the ones who initiated the UC plan."

Gilboa turned his frightened face around as he interrupted, " The UC plan, you say? As in those guys who built the "Unicorn Gundam"…?" Zinnerman recalled that mobile suit that was built to destroy Zeon, the demonic face of that Newtype-destroying machine, and calmly asked, "So they're?" Gael looked at Earth that was shown on the window, and said,

"The Migration Issues Committee, the largest conservative force that determined the Federation Space Migration Plan all this while. "

Part 7

"…You're right. I heard that every elected Prime Minister had taken up the post of the Migration Issues Committee Leader before . Doesn't that you…you know?"

Mrs Barrows raised the duck confit on the fork as she gave a pondering look while looking over at everyone's faces that were seated on the table. She was showing off such indecent table etiquette as if she was at a restaurant in town, but the other ladies did not frown so easily. Their faces that were full of make-up showed appropriate cordial smiles as they looked around on the long table, giving either envious or evaluating looks at the couple that organized this party.

"Not all the Prime Ministers were like that."

Cynthia Marcenas was probably used to such stares as she showed neither an inviting smile nor an annoyed smile, calmly dodging this topic at hand with some words she thought about on the fly. The daughter of the Marcenas family showed a graceful and fearless princess appearance as she kept an observing look, noting where she was in. She, who was almost 30, had the flair of a female host who had experienced all sorts of turbulent moments. " My my, you're so modest about it." Cynthia gave a smile that had some invisible hesitance towards this flattery as she quickly glanced through the table, not forgetting to check if everyone's wine glasses were filled.

"No no no, please just leave it at that! If not, I'll probably be so pressurized as a son-in-law that I won't have room to breathe!"

Patrick, who was sitting beside Cynthia, spoke with a voice that boomed throughout the room, putting a stop to this delicate topic. Patrick had a sportsman-like tall and muscular physique, an earnest smile, and had sincere gestures that were welcomed by the old people. These were unique inherent qualities that made him attractive, but the impression had on him was that he studied well. Before he married in, Patrick was working as an underling of Ronan, and until this point, where he was running for a local election, he took the important role of first secretary, and he was trained this way for the future. But on closer inspection, there would be signs of aspects he was not natural in, so it would depend on his qualifications if he could stand out here and make his way to the Dakar Committee proudly. At this point, his first duty would be to act as a cheery host for this party and wrangle for local support. However, he probably did not expect the atmosphere brewed by the powerful local ladies to be so hard to deal with.

After the war, B&D Inc. managed to revive itself, and Mrs Barrows was the wife of the chairman of that enterprise. She was also the president of the women's support group, and because of her lead, one could see people like the wife of the chairman of the sunbelt area revival association, the wife of a protestant pastor from South America that still had many believers in the South, and the wife of a leading Farmers' association president. There were less than 10 middle-aged women seated around the long table in the dining room, and they pretended to look courteous and fearful

that they were invited to the mansion of a powerful Senator, but there was no doubt that these people thought that they should be invited here. These people approached the high-ranking senator who would most likely be the next Prime Minister, and eyed for a chance to offer their graces while showing their powerful backings without leaving anything behind. They would always show that they could determine the fate of a political whenever they had the time. Their husbands had such shameless thoughts, thinking that they should leave everything in society to the politicians, and if there were a need, they should create politicians with their own hands, and in front of Mineva's eyes, the ladies were a splitting reflection of their arrogance.

Mineva's stomach felt heavy as she swallowed her sigh, and it was a difficult thing for her to put the duck into the mouth. *So is this the truth behind politics of absolute democracy? That how power with the people is determined by buying and selling of votes?* She memorized everything about ruling, but this was too intense for her body that never had the chance to interact with the real society. She cautiously read the atmosphere as she again realized that she was in a delicate situation.

As Riddhe had been talking to Ronan all this while, Mineva did not have the chance to plan any lines, and she was overwhelmed by Cynthia's bulldozer-like hospitality, so she could only attend this party as Audrey Burne. It was the complete opposite of what Cynthia said about a relaxed family party as the food that was served was a French full course, the red wine were top-class Eighties bottles that were opened, and there were 6 servants on standby around the dining table. It was obvious to see that as the host, they were planning to use their wealth show their true

prosperity to the ladies of the rich and powerful, and it was obvious to see that. Even the gown Mineva was wearing was a customized branded product Cynthia ordered during her life as a student. Cynthia herself said *"It's already outdated, but it's fine if the person wearing it is good looking"*, but Mineva could only think about standard dress uniform when it came to formal dress attire, so she could not tell the differences in that. She found it difficult to adapt to the bare shoulders and arms design, and in the end, she did not know how to adapt as she could only spend time listening to the empty conversations.

"As for the young lord, he's an elite who graduated from the officer cadet academy. I'm really envious of it."

Mrs Barrows did not thank the servant who poured red wine for her as she increased her volume, seemingly drank. She, whose fat arms would shudder whenever she raised the knife, seemed more concerned about the private life of a Senate Council member than the future of a local election candidate's future in front of her. When Ronan popped by to greet them before retreating, she was the one who wanted him to stay, "Another one of my relatives was an officer." Another lady continued.

"But he's retired, and he's now a consultant at Anaheim Group. "

"Oh my. So that means he's an elite as well?"

"Will you enter politics in the future and help in your father's work?"

The Cynthia couple's expression froze, and Dwiyon, who was on standby behind, showed a tense expression on his face as well. As the ladies focused at one point, Mineva could only force herself to look over at the seat beside her, at the face of the person in question.

Ever since the self-introduction from before, Riddhe did not say anything, and even at this point, he looked like he did not care about his surroundings. He looked very distracted as he moved his knife and fork, stuffing the unsliced duck into his mouth. He had been looking like this ever since he talked to Ronan. *Did they break off on rather bad terms?* As Mineva wondered, Cynthia spoke up, " My little brother here is bad at it." and Mineva turned to look at her.

"His mind isn't sharp except when it comes to piloting mobile suits, right, Miss Audrey?"

Help me carry on, please? Her eyes were telling Mineva this. Mineva could not say anything immediately as she merely gave an awkward smile. "Speaking of which, how you heard of it? There was a terrorist attack again!" Another person's voice caused her heart to jump.

"Yeah yeah yeah. It happened on Anaheim's industrial colony, right? It's said that the Neo Zeon remnants did it."

"Space really is scary. Will all the people die once there's a hole pierced through the colony? They're like fish in a tank. I'm trembling whenever I think about it."

"And those Zeon mobile suits, are they called "Zakus"? They did come here during the war. Those mobile suits have only one eye, their shoulders have some spike like thing. They really don't look like things humans will create."

"They're people who threw people colonies and meteors onto Earth. They're different in both common sense and thoughts from us after all."

"Most of them are people whose parents and brothers were born in space, and they never came down to Earth, I suppose? It's a little too direct to say that, but they're still aliens after all. To the Spacenoids, Earth is basically a resource colony. If we granted their self-governance, who knows what will happen? That's why we have to manage it well."

Lines after lines continued to jab at Mineva's bare shoulders like sharp needles, seemingly trying to pierce. Ding, "Excuse me, madams." Cynthia tapped the glass as her words attracted everyone's attention.

"Please avoid discriminatory remarks. My husband will be worried if this would be a trap set up by the media."

Patrick followed up on this joke with some grumbling. *Well, hohoho*, the ladies let out laughter. Mineva exhaled slightly, and was about to gulp down the glass full of water, but another voice, "Miss Audrey, may I know where you're from?" causing her to choke on it.

"If you're related to the Anaheim Group, I suppose you're from the Moon?"

"The Moon is a nice place. Unlike Spacenoids, moon residents are full of common sense. They have low gravity, and it's nice for beauty. I'm thinking of going there myself once, but I really can't decide after hearing that it'll take more than 3 days to get there on a spaceship…"

Mineva could not and had no reason to go along with what they said as she looked away from the women of Earth lined up in front of her. *Just smile and act along and everything will be fine*— she understood, but she could not give this kind of smile to them. This would be belittling her parents, and it would be blasphemy to the soldiers who died. All sorts of words raged in her mind, and as she clenched the fists on her knees, the sound of a chair being moved back rang.

Riddhe stood up as he did not look at anyone, but straight forward as he left the scene wordlessly. The footsteps of the boots were filled with anger, shocking the cold atmosphere. The grey officer uniform disappeared behind the door, and the ones left in the dining room were the stunned stupefied looks of the women.

"Did we say something to dampen his mood?"

Mrs Barrows asked, and in response to her puzzled and curious face, Cynthia immediately rounded off, "Sorry."

"It seemed that he saw something devastating during the terrorist attack from before. He's been like this ever since he got home. Please don't mind."

Cynthia said as she gave a quiet look to Mineva, asking her what was going on. Patrick too inadvertently met Mineva in the eyes, and Mineva scanned the expressions all the ladies gave. She lost the chance to chase Riddhe and could only move the fork to stuff the duck into her mouth that had already lost appetite. As she wanted to stuff it in, "Speaking of which, isn't the son of Mr. Barrows…" Cynthia's voice filled up this emptiness.

Part 8

The atmosphere at the seats cooled off, and it took about 10 minutes before Mineva could leave her seat naturally. She left the party with a stomach full of undigested food, and walked around the mansion, trying to look for Riddhe.

It was unknown if most of the servants went to help out with the party as the mansion was completely quiet. Ronan should be working inside the house, but there was no way to detect his presence in this large mansion. Mineva went from the hall to the stairs, passed through the empty wide corridor, and went forward. She saw Riddhe's back as he stood on the terrace facing the courtyard.

At this moment, the wall clock let out a sound, and it was 18.30. If the time was taken at Greenwich Meridian standard, it would be 23.30 in space. She looked up at the digital clock that showed both

timings, and again understood that she was in a place that was very distant. She passed through the door that was opened and stepped onto the terrace. The wind blowing by the courtyard caused the curtains to flutter, flipping some pages of a book that was being read.

Riddhe continued to stare at the trails of the setting red Western sky as his back did not move. The sounds of the helicopters flying from afar were mixed in amongst the winds, causing the trees surrounding the courtyard to buzz unsteadily.

Mineva looked up at the sky that was turning from orange to blue and to a deep indigo color, and smelled the flavor of the evening wind that had the presence of night hidden in it. “I’m sorry” the voice entered her ears, and she looked forward, staring right at Riddhe’s back as he still looked forward. She lowered her face and said, “There’s no need for you to apologize…”

“I feel that this is reality too. If I continue to remain in Neo Zeon , I wouldn’t know all of these things.”

This might be a good chance to learn. Mineva muttered in her depressed heart, but she could not find any words to overcome these words that were full of such prejudice. She thought that mutual understanding was just a dream, and she remained unable to breathe in this helplessness of hers. “That’s not it.” Riddhe said as his shoulders trembled, and he clenched his hands that were on the handrails tightly.

“That’s not what I want to talk about…”

The sunset showed the figure of the shoulders, and the shoulders were trembled, probably because he was crying. That was not an emotion that could be caused by a breakdown in talks between him and Ronan, and Mineva sensed that there was a greater despair and sense of loss here, “Riddhe…” she called him, and approached his trembling figure.

Suddenly, that back profile left the handrails, and Riddhe turned to Mineva, his chest filling her sights. Mineva was hugged around the shoulders as she was pulled to him, and he embraced her in his clutches.

"I'm sorry, I…I actually brought you to such a unthinkable place…!"

Riddhe's arms that were hugging Mineva exerted more force as he uttered out such unperceivable words, sounding like he was trying to squeeze out all the fluids in his body. Mineva wanted to push her aside, but notice that she had no place to exert strength, and was shocked as she felt Riddhe's body warmth.

"No matter what, I'll protect you well no matter what, so please stay here, stay by me…don't leave me alone…"

Water droplets that had warmth dripped on her hair, wetting her forehead. *Why is he crying? What's causing him so much pain? At that moment, Mineva had no sense of uneasiness or disgust as she felt Riddhe's trembling body with her own. She hesitated over whether she should put her arms around him, and she looked at the sky that was entering the night from past the shoulders wearing the military uniform.*

Mineva saw the stars flicker on the other end of the thick atmosphere. That star looked much more gentler than what she saw in space, but it was so blurry and hard to grasp sight of.

Part 9

It may be most appropriate to describe this as a donut that was bitten off. The ring-shaped construct that was 500m in diameter did revolve in the past and created enough centrifuge gravity within its inner walls to match the gravity of the moon, but what was supposed to be a Stanford Torus-type space station was left

with a part of a ring, and it became a debris that was less than 150m long, floating amidst the vacuum. The warning lights flickered on the gradually curved cylinder, and the way it floated above Earth either looked like a bitten donut or a carcass of a whale—and the dismal look of it was such that it was reminiscent of a rotten corpse with its bones baring halfways.

""Laplace", huh?"

"This is the first place we'll think about when we talk about " Laplace Box' alright…"

Otto mused to himself, and Liam followed up with a slow voice. Both of them were staring at the main screen of the bridge in front of them, and the image displayed on it was the debris of "Laplace" . 96 years ago, this place collapsed with the start of the Universal Century, and this Prime Minister official residence, together with the first Prime Minister, became scraps, and the scene in front of their eyes was weathered for a long time. The force from the explosion caused "Laplace" to accelerate, and it once moved along the long and wide oval orbit. Then, after many years of gravity, it finally returned back to its original orbit as it overlooked Earth.

"Laplace" was a large piece of space debris that was very likely to become an orbital obstacle, but because of its historical value, the government decided to carry out methods of preservation on it . Thus, this historical site was left at a height of 200km, along with the artificial satellites that totaled to less than 500. Its orbital path was through the north and south poles, and it needed only 90 minutes to orbit around. With this orbital motion and the Earth revolving around, the "Laplace" could basically navigate through

the entire territory of Earth in 24 hours. It really seemed to fit the impression of a Prime Minister residence as it was not rooted at a specific area or country, but "Laplace" continued to slow down even till this day, and some predicted that it would soon fall onto Earth in a few years. Of course, by that time, "Laplace" would probably be broken down before that happened, and the large number of fragments would burn out once it reached the atmosphere.

There would definitely be photos of "Laplace" in history textbooks, but they would not look too much into it unless they were researchers and scholars in this discipline. This might be the first time since the terrorist attack 100 years ago that the army carried out an investigation. "This feels like it's nothing much, you know." Liam said this, and Otto shrugged, saying,

"I feel the same, but it's a fact that this is the place the coordinates from the Laplace Program indicated. Latitude 0, Longitude 0, 200km in height. The debris of "Laplace" will definitely pass by here every day."

The object would never remain at a single point on the low orbit formed by the powerful force of Earth's gravity. Since the "Box" floating at a specific point was not a joke, they could not ignore the possibility of the "Laplace" debris being linked with the "Box" as it would float past the place regularly, or rather, there was no other possibility to investigate. "You're right, but…" Liam showed a bitter expression on her face as she turned to the debris of "Laplace ".

"If the "Laplace Box" is really there, this really isn't something that can be described as a lamp on a ten-foot pole, lighting everything from afar but not in close anymore. It's like a bad joke."

"Seriously, ever since the social studies visit in primary school, I 've never been as close to this place. That's the starting point of the Universal Century, the extremely infamous "Laplace Incident" history…for example."

At this point, the battleship was approximately 400km in height , 8,000km away from "Laplace". Otto confirmed that the "Nahel Argama" was about to pass by the border between space and sky as it gradually closed in on the intersection point with "Laplace", but was shocked by a line, "At my time, it was removed from the learning course."

Otto and Liam both turned around at the same time, and saw Alberto in a white heavy normal suit, using one hand to hold a briefcase.

"You took care of me, Captain. You too, First Officer."

He did not even show a courteous smile as he suddenly reached his hand out. There was a spaceship approaching the "Nahel Argama", ready to receive the people from Anaheim. Alberto's unexpected orderly attitude caused Otto to hold back a wry smile as he and Liam glanced at each other. He held Alberto's hand and said, "We too…but I really can't pretend to say this."

"We suffered a lot because of you. I probably won't forget your face in such a short time."

He was not trying to be sarcastic. Having once stood on the boundary of life and death for more than a week, Otto would feel some attachment to such a face as well. Alberto's face twitched and pulled back his hand, saying, "It's really a pity that I can't see through the investigations…" He looked away, not hiding the ashamed feeling within him. Otto seemed to realize that the other man was hiding something under his thick facial skin as he frowned.

"I'll pray for the long-lasting military luck of this battleship. Now then."

Alberto lifted his face, said that, and did not even have the time to look right back at them as he stepped off the floor. He immediately pasted through the bridge door and went to the elevator together with his subordinates that were waiting outside the room. *During this journey, he was probably touched in some way.* Otto forgot the uneasiness that crept slightly in him as he watched that back profile he most likely would not see a second time, only to hear Liam say, "How strange."

"That guy's been so insistent on getting the "Box", and now he's leaving the ship without seeing the outcome."

"He's been making mistakes all this time anyway. Most likely, he's being relieved of his duties. The investigation results will likely reach Anaheim's ears through the Senate Council's anyway, and he's just an underling who's supposed to serve authority."

"Is that all?"

Liam continued softly as she did not look away from Alberto, who left through the door. Otto looked at the side of her face.

"I'm wondering about why the Senate Council would allow the prisoner to follow them. Even though Anaheim intends to use this trip to Earth to drop the prisoner in a North American detention center, it's normally impossible to let a civilian ship move the prisoner. How does headquarters intend to deal with her?"

"The given reason is that there are no Newtype facilities on " Luna II"."

"What kind of facilities is needed? She's a patient, you know? Don't tell me they intend to send her to a Newtype-research…"

Newtype-research, or a Newtype-research facility. Otto felt a chill in his heart because of this place that was called a notorious human experiment plant, but answered, "You're thinking too much. The NT-research should be closed a long time ago." But Liam looked like she could not accept this as she said "That's good if that were the case."

"Besides, we can't provide ample treatment for her here. We can only leave it—"

A slight tremor occurred inside the ship, causing Otto to swallow the words he was about to say. A blueish-white thruster flare glided past the bridge window at this time as it gradually merged into the silhouette of Earth that was showing night. The second squad of mobile suits started to launch. "Romeo 010 left ship." Mihiro reported, and her voice came from the communication console on the starboard.

"Then, ECOAS 920, please get into launch sequence. RX-0, to the first catapult. Please leave the ship after ECOAS 920."

During this week, Mihiro became rather poised as a communicator operator, and with her voice giving command, the mobile suits on the multi-monitor moved according to their designated action. The brown colored "Loto" with the serial number 920 on it stood on the 3rd catapult deck on the starboard in mobile suit form. The white frame of the RX-0, "Unicorn" stood on the elevator in the meantime, and was about to be moved from the mobile suit deck to the first catapult deck in the middle.

The "Unicorn" was preparing to launch with standard armaments, a customized beam rifle on its right hand, and a shield on its left hand, but at this moment, there was a cylindrical equipment latched on its backpack. it was probably a hyper bazooka. The maintenance team did contact the bridge, and they

hoped to use this customized equipment for the "Unicorn" they reclaimed from the "Magallanica" for data collection as the machine prepared to launch.

It was an unknown situation with an unknown mobile suit. In this sense, the pilot would be a lab rat. Otto felt that even adults would try to avoid this situation as he looked at the communication monitor from past Mihiro's shoulders. He could not see the expression of the pilot in the cockpit as it was blocked by the helmet visor.

"So he's finally willing to ride on it…?"

Eh? Otto did not look at Liam's doubtful expression that was shot right back at him, and he put his spine back in place on the Captain's seat as he looked right in front. He saw that the current time was 22.30 on the screen's digital clock, and Mihiro started communicating with the "Unicorn" at this point.

"Do you hear me, Banagher? The "Nahel Argama" is currently under low orbit on Earth. The movement and operation basics in space are still the same, but you have to be concerned about how gravity affects you. If you do not maintain a steady speed, you'll be dragged down by the gravity…"

Part 10

(…We haven't confirmed that the "Unicorn" has atmospheric re-entry capabilities. In the case you do fall in, calm down and ask an assisting mobile suit for help. The "ReZELs" are equipped with atmospheric entry equipment, so it can feel the "Unicorn" onto

Earth when necessary but this is to be the final emergency means. Do not look away from the speedometer and check where your allies are when piloting, understand?)

This is just a repeat of the briefing beforehand. What's there I don't know? Banagher suppressed this grumbling as he answered, "yes", checking the machine status through the 3 display boards. The right arm and left leg that were damaged during the last battle were repaired, the airflow, mobility and controls were all fine, and the energy gain was higher than usual. After checking these, Banagher let his machine move forward and head towards the vacuum that opened on the other side of the shutter. He saw Earth, surrounded by the darkness of night, and let the stars that was in its profile enter his eyes. (ECOAS 920 left the ship.) Mihiro announced, and her voice echoed throughout.

The "Loto" floated slightly from the 3rd catapult on the starboard. This ECOAS transformable mobile suit, which was smaller than an ordinary mobile suit by 2 sizes, could not launch from the catapult as it was of a different specifications. This smaller machine let out vernier flares as it moved towards the outside of the ship step by step, and the "ReZEL" that transformed into Waverider form matched its velocity. The "Loto" then shot out its magic arm from its sleeve and grabbed onto the grip on the "ReZEL" from behind.

The thruster flares shot out, bringing the "ReZEL" ferrying the " Loto" on its back away. At this moment, (RX-0, equip catapult.) Mihiro notified, and Banagher let the machine's feet step onto the slipper-shaped catapult. This was the fourth time he activated the "Unicorn", but it was the first time he was launching on the

catapult. His tense hands gripped onto the control sticks, and a certain thought that gathered in his mind beforehand suddenly popped up. He said out something he had not thought about a second ago.

"Erm, Ensign Mihiro, sorry about just now."

(Understood. RX-0. Path is clear. Please proceed.)

The cold voice caused Banagher's heart to feel like he was abandoned. He looked through the communication window, and saw Mihiro's stiff expression as she communicated with the other machines. "Don't talk privately." The voice from behind felt like a beating on the heat.

"The launching window is in seconds. The operator has no time to worry about such unnecessary things."

Daguza was seated on the assistance seat located on the right side of the linear seat, looking like he was a robot ready to launch. He was piloting a mobile suit that would lose control without warning, and the one sitting beside him was a robot that was unemotional. Banagher asked himself for a moment, wondering why he was doing such a thing. "You know how to report when you leave the ship?" Daguza repeated, and Banagher responded " understood" as he exerted strength on his abdomen with reckless abandon.

"Banagher Links, "Unicorn", launching!"

The countdown timer indicated 0, and the deck crew standing beside the catapult immediately pulled down the conductance bar. The linear activated catapult unit started to advance as it shot out, and the "Unicorn", which was bending forward, immediately glided down the runway deck.

Banagher immediately felt that he was unable to breathe as his bones and flesh was rattling, pressed down on the linear seat. The G-force felt like it was about to force the eyeballs out relaxed, and the "Nahel Argama" that was shown on the rear surveillance window became really small and distant. Banagher pulled the control stick down somewhat. The backpack had a hyper bazooka that was more than 15m, and the rear skirt on the waist had Magnum catridges and bazooka magazines, so the machine felt heavier than usual. Considering that the machine would be affected by the gravity, it would be appropriate to set the AMBAC control 2 times more than usual. Banagher used the manual controls to reconfigure the settings, checked that the radar signal functions were normal, and moved at a relative velocity with the allied machine that went beforehand before Daguza could instruct him.

I'm getting used to it. Hassan's words appeared in his mind, and then disappeared. The Earth that was covered by night appeared below Banagher, and the continents he did not know appeared amidst the bottom of the shadows.

Part 11

The marker that left the "Mock Trojan Horse" started to close in on the marker that left first. Both of them went by the wire frame that indicated the 3 dimensional Earth, and looked like they were headed to the given coordinates."

"Confirming that the 5th machine launched. It's gradually meeting u with the 4th machine that launched first, and it's moving towards the rendezvous."

The crew member sitting on the navigation seat said. Zinnerman looked over Flaste, who swapped seats with Gilboa and was on the steering seat, and stared at the sensor screen that had multiple markers moving on it. "Is that the Gundam?" he asked, and the crew answered, "Unable to confirm. The psyco monitor has no response." as his voice echoed through the bridge of the "Garencieres" that got into battle mode.

"Besides, I heard that the psyco monitor is activated together with the NT-D. So we can't trace the signal when it's in the lone horn phase…what about the Foundation's ship?"

"It's approaching the "Mock Trojan Horse". If the "Mock Trojan Horse" slows down till the revolving speed in this situation, both sides will probably meet each other 10 minutes later. The location is 360km directly above the equator, 15 degrees longitude, 28 minutes."

Zinnerman did not bother to finish listening to the crew member as he took up the communication mic. “Gael Chan, it’s just like what you heard.” He spoke as he opened a window on the captain seat’s console.

“The connecting will take about 15 minutes, but this is still tight on the time schedule. We’ll look for them once the two ships connect. Is that fine with you?”

(Couldn’t ask for any better.) Gael, who was seated inside the cockpit of the “Eye-Zack”, stared through the visor at Zinnerman. “If they’re trying to attach each other, it’ll be easier to determine each other’s movements. I’ll be able to catch the target in the shortest time possible.”

It was reckless, but Gael’s judgement was correct. If the Foundation’s ship was meant to ferry their own members, Martha’ s subordinates would definitely be gathered at the airlock of the attachment. It would be easier to capture the target than to search aimlessly inside the ship. “Roger that. Good luck.” Zinnerman said , (Same to your side. It was a short while, but you took care of me) Gael answered with a rare courteous voice.

(If both of us survive, let me treat you to a toast.)

“I’m not going to bear responsibility if there’s a stench of Zeon in the wine, you know?”

(There’ll always be exceptions…Gael Chan, launching.)

ROOM. There was a slight shock, and the fact that the " Eye-Zack" moved from the hangar at the rear reached everyone. The machine with a large radome-like hat on the head lit its vernier jets and attained relative velocity from the "Garencieres", lighting it monoeye. The vacuum floated past it, and it let out flares from its main thrusters. At this point, it was sucked in towards the Earth that was large enough to fill his sights.

The "Mock Trojan Horse" was hidden amongst the night that dyed the hemisphere, intending to meet the Foundation's ship. They probably would not expect a sudden raid within the absolute defense zone of Earth at a height close to the atmosphere. This would be the chance when the transport ship heads off to investigate the "Box"—Zinnerman switched the communication channel and spoke into the mic in his hands, saying, "Over to you, Gilboa."

"Once that guy approaches the "Mock Trojan Horse", start the distractions. Make things as chaotic as possible and try to buy him time. Marida should be located in the center of the ship, so some tremors should be okay."

(I understand…but can we trust him?)

There were 3 "Geara Zulus" being dragged outside with the hangar, and Gilboa was seated in one of them with a blade antenna on the head, using a cautious voice that was befitting of his nature. To him, who had a family waiting for him back home, it was questionable why Gael would show such an expression that was devoid of tactics and self-preservation. Zinnerman did not think too much about the slight divide felt between him and his

subordinate as he chimed in, “In terms of stupidity, that man can be said to be on an equal standing as us.”

“He’s like us in terms of stupidity too. I feel that he’s someone who can be trusted.”

Gilboa too felt that he was not a bad man (I understand) he repeated, and Zinnerman continued, “The Captain and his group will reach immediately. There’s also Tikva and the rest waiting. Don’t mess around.” He then cut the communication feed and looked forward. As they were in the stage of battle, the bridge was tilted 90 degrees forward, and the window that would normally be seen in front disappeared. The bowl-shaped main screen was on the front end of the bridge, showing multiple windows, including the sensors screens, and Earth, which could be seen on the display, was half buried by these information.

During this operation, Gael would board the enemy ship alone and secure Martha’s subordinate and Marida. *How exactly will that guy who has nowhere to return to like me fare?* There was less than an hour before Frontal’s forces reached, and Zinnerman could only feel anxious while he waited for the outcome, and he looked at Earth that showed both areas of day and night clearly.

Is the princess safe? This doubt Zinnerman wanted to really avoid appeared from the blue planet, and it pressed down on his heavy heart even further.

Part 12

When looking down 200km from above, Earth looked more like a landscape than a planet. Anyone who kept looking down would have an impression that they could jump straight down.

Speaking of which, what kind of people are there? What kind of lives do they live? Banagher did not know the answer. From the message on the navigation system, he could tell that it was the Atlantic Ocean right below him, and the land lying in front was the African continent. He could also tell that there were small lights gathered at the coastline. They were the lights of the Federation government capital, Dakar, but that was all. Banagher could not imagine the flavor of the sea breeze from the shore or the heat of the desert or real gravity. He, who was born and grew up in the cylinder of a space colony, could not understand how the planet, a life-maintaining installation, worked, how that sphere could create its own gravity just by being there.

The grey clouds appeared beneath the darkness of night, and Earth showed its face towards the vacuum silently. *Audrey's there somewhere on this monstrously large sphere*—Banagher stared at the surface of the ocean that was floating below his feet, and saw the emerald-colored eyes on it. He said stiffly, "Currently moving to the designated coordinates" and turned his face to the front.

"3, 2, 1…we'll reach the designated coordinates. Latitude 0, Longitude 0, height 200km. No responses from the sensors. There is no reaction from the NT-D and the Laplace Program."

Daguza worked on the computer located in front of the assistance seat as he calmly made this report. Is this the

coordinates given by the Laplace Program? It merely showed a zero for an instant, and Banagher checked that the monitor image switched back to latitude and longitude values, feeling frustrated as he looked around.(Understood. The trajectory and velocity of the "Relic" have not changed. There is still T-minus 1238 till it reaches the designated location. Currently on course with the machine.) Banagher heard Mihiro answer as he opened all sorts of sensor windows on the all-view monitor and re-inspected the CG-corrected visual. The movement sensor picked up the communication satellite within the range, and he could not see even a single piece of debris within his eyes. "We'll now start to make contact with the relic" Banagher ignored Daguza's words as he tried to look up at the "Nahel Argama" that was above him.

The ship that was at a height 400km above looked like one of the many stars. As for the ship that was attached, there was no presence to be felt, and it was impossible to confirm if it really existed. A spaceship made contact with the "Nahel Argama" to receive Alberto and the Anaheim people back. It was said that Marida would be riding on it and sent back to Earth as well. Banagher could not detect her psycowaves as he felt only uneasiness.

During the battle at "Palau", I could sense the surroundings more acutely. The acute awareness that time, and that moment of "resonance", was it all just a hallucination I saw in the midst of euphoria—

"What did you sense?"

Daguza asked. In the face of this esper-like instinct from him, Banagher could only answer “Nothing…” as he frantically looked forward.

“The machine’s system can take effect on your body through the psycommu. Tell me if there’re any slight changes.”

Banagher felt really uneasy by Daguza’s usual monotonous robotic-like tone, and he felt like he was treated as a cog. Before he was instructed, he held onto the control stick and let the machine turn to the course that was coming his way, and mused to himself in an audible voice, “We’re like idiots for doing this.” and Daguza’ s stare shot onto the back of Banagher’s head, sharp enough to make a sound.

“What exactly is the “Box”? What kind of shape is it? How big is it? Is that something that’ll float around in such a place?”

“It’s because we don’t know that we’re currently investigating. Just concentrate on piloting. There’ll only be a chance for us to make contact with the relic.”

This would be what it meant by going straight to the point. Banagher endured the urge the let the thruster flares keep burning as he piloted the machine with the help of the navigation program. The “Unicorn” left the space above the Equator and arrived at the orbit hovering over the North and South poles. The “Unicorn” drew an arc over the Northern hemisphere, and the two “ReZELs”, each carrying a “Loto” followed the “Unicorn” as it drew an arc on the Earth’s surface.

The speedometer continued to accelerate, and the distance that was maintained at 200km continued to increase from time to time. If he used up too much flares, the machine would end up at a speed where it would leave orbit, and the machine would move away from the trajectory. He had to maintain a speed of 7.78km per second in low orbit, and the relic, the debris of "Laplace" was moving at the same speed as it orbited above the two poles. If they wanted to make contact with it, he would have to leave the space above the Equator and first try to negate the inertial speed it had gathered up till now, reduce the relative velocity and height of the machine and let the machine get back on the orbit above the two poles. They could not wait at the designated coordinates for the debris to reach. Once the machine stopped, the relative velocity with the Earth's rotational speed would become zero, the machine would become a prisoner of gravity, and it would be dragged down to the atmosphere.

There was a need for the machine to keep fighting against the powerful gravity on Earth. This was the troublesome part about a mission in low orbit. If he did not follow the interacting course and activate the machine according to the time schedule, he would not be able to make contact with "Laplace" at the given coordinates. " Laplace" would only meet that place once every day, which meant that there was only one chance to make contact. *There's only one chance,* Daguza was not kidding when he said these words, and Banagher cautiously piloted the "Unicorn" and let the machine head to the orbit above the two poles as it cut the equator. The relic in question was not at a distance where the human eye could spot, and the radar monitor was the only thing with a marker flickering as it was connected to a communication satellite.

"The Laplace Program will provide the information once it confirmed the machine's location. One proof is how it did not show new information when the NT-D was activated."

The intersecting course was half finished, and as Banagher slowed the machine down to let the autopilot take over, Daguza finally spoke up. Banagher did not look away from the values of all the meters as he merely listened to the man.

"Putting the "Laplace Box" at "Laplace"…it sure sounds stupid. Also, if the existence of the "Box" was viewed as something significant, someone would have investigated beforehand. However, this Laplace Program indicates that something is on this coordinate, and the debris of "Laplace" would pass by here every day at midnight. Latitude 0, longitude 0, midnight…there's a hint to this coincidence. There's some worth in investigating this."

The time at this point was 23.44, and there was still 16 minutes until the three zeros intersect—Banagher felt a chilling presence approaching from the relic marker that was gradually closing in, and said, "It was originally meant to be on this orbit in the first place, so I suppose that's how it should be."

"It's said that the debris that was gradually moving further away because of the explosion is starting to get pulled back by the gravity bit by bit onto its original orbit."

"That's true, but the hint of this coincidence isn't just as such. The coordinates indicated by the program is at the exact same spot as the location where the "Laplace Incident" happened. At midnight, Universal Century 001, the Prime Minister residence "

Laplace" was blown up at this place. The first prime minister of the Federation government and the representatives from each country were blown up here.

Banagher recalled the documentary he saw when this incident was introduced in history class, and had an overlapping vision of this space in front of him. As he did that, he felt his body cool immediately. As the whole world watched, that shape of "Laplace " collapsed without warning, and the donut-shaped living area exploded from inside. This happened approximately 100 years ago —

"After this Laplace Incident, the Federation government used the reason of security to not set up base in space. The Ereism and anti-government movements were being eradicated after that, and the One Year War happened in the end…now, everything in this world can be traced back to that "Laplace Incident". If it had not happened—"

"Perhaps we might have a different world from now."

Banagher seized the initiative to talk first as he turned around to ask, "…Is that how is it?", and Daguza replied, "it's pointless to think much about it." not giving a denying or affirming look.

"The Federation government was an organization meant to conduct the Space Migration Plan. Countries, religions, races…in order to overcome all these shackles and send half of humanity to space, they'll have to create an absolute authority that will exert its

strength. Humans create their own gods to save this planet that was reaching its limits due to population explosion and global warming."

Daguza glanced aside to look at the African continent that could be seen through the clouds as he said this. As technology advanced, humanity managed to prolong its lifespans, and as the theory of feeding an exploding population would eat into resources came about, Earth in the old ages stared to accelerate towards its destruction. There were only two options to choose from, whether to reduce their civilization, or to look at other means of survival, and humanity chose the latter and lived on. However, it was not easy to fulfill this option. If there were ten people, there would be a need to convince 10 different thought processes. To ensure that everyone was on the same page, it was imperative to have a certain organization with absolute authority and power. it had to be an dictator, one that did not know mercy, one that was arrogant, and one that would not listen to what other people said.

Only humans have Gods…is this how it is? Banagher felt a pulsating in a part of his brain he did not feel before as he felt hot there, and muttered, "They tried to turn the Federation government…into a god." The lights of Dakar were so far they could not be seen, and the Gulf of Guinea that was right below the coordinates they were on was asleep in deep darkness.

"There aren't a lot of things that can be solved through negotiations. A stop-gap organization that does not have any power will only lead to tragedy. The United Nations of the old centuries proved this. In order to allow Earth and humanity to live

on, the god that doesn't know mercy will force all those who defy to submit…to the Federation government that had such an absolute nature, the "Laplace Incident" was an accident that happened at the right time. It not only gave the Federation government an excuse to sweep all opposition, but could also allow its power to continue running under the name of relief aid in emergency situation. Thus, this failsafe of arrogance ended up in their hands."

"But how…you mean that the "Laplace Incident" was something the Federation government enacted themselves?"

This was a point that would definitely appear when talking about conspiracies. Banagher too saw similar kinds of movies, but it had a completely different weight when an adult like Daguza was talking about this. In response, Daguza answered, "The truth is still shrouded in darkness."

"However, such things do happen in the adult world from time to time. Once a fetter is set up, the task of protecting the fetter itself would become something the adults had to deal with, and this would cause them to lose their ability to view things from an objective standpoint. It is the same with the "Laplace Box", I believe. Currently, none of the Central Cabinet members and the officials know what is it about. They had to remain fearful of the " Box", and they continued to protect this "Box", creating a symbolic relationship with the Vist Foundation that lasted for 100 years."

"Fetter…"

"This can't be changed with individual strength, and they have no intention of changing. The organization itself is swallowed by their instincts to protect themselves, and unknowingly, that group of people became cogs that only cared about protecting themselves . This can happen to any organization, not just the Federation."

But as he said this, Daguza looked like he had not changed into a cog completely as he showed a determined look on his face. Banagher felt that he finally managed to connect with this robot that had a nerve as he glanced at that person's eyes, saying cautiously, "It's said that the "Box" has the power to topple the Federation."

"Like, what if that "Box" contains information relating to the truth of the "Laplace Incident"…"

"That's not very possible. It happened 100 years ago, so all the people involved should be dead. I don't think a scandal of that level will be able to uproot the Federation like that. If it's not something that involves something more basic, the basis behind the "Box" will not be established till now."

What is it then? Banagher swallowed this doubt that was about to rise out from his throat and stared at the display board. *It's because we don't know that we're investigating.* Daguza would probably answer something like this. No matter what the content of the "Box" was, he, who stood on the side protecting the Federation, would not have any other theories. If Banagher criticized Daguza, he would just be doing so to the wrong person. He understood that if he could be so self-aware in this world he

was protected in, that he was born and raised in the grace of civilization, all careless critiques would end up returning back to him. The "fetter" Daguza talked about would refer to social order.

Cardeas ignored the will of the Federation and wanted to release the "Box", and Marida and the other Neo Zeon people were trying to get the "Box"; from this viewpoint, both parties would be viewed as people breaking the order, while the Federation government Daguza and the rest represented would be the people hunting these resisting forces and protecting the order in this distorted environment…ever since they were born, they were chose to bear an arrogant fate, and they were a group of gods who did not understand mercy. The Federation lost a lot of its power during the One Year War, but it still intended to recover and regain that power. They built the "Unicorn" mobile suit, wanted to use it to eradicate all remaining forces of Zeon, and even get the "Box" back—a sigh leaked out from Banagher's hot head as he turned his tired stare at Earth that was still sleeping in the night .

It was the starting place of the Universal Century, and this might be the historical point of disagreement the Federation government committed to remain intact. If we really find the "Box" here, what'll happen? Do we hand it over to the Federation? This misery that had lasted for 100 years would vanish, and there would be nothing that could threaten the Federation. The full-scale war Audrey was worried about would not happen, and the current social order can be protected, but what next?

They have the power to fight the government, and intended to use this hope that was woven out since 100 years ago, but unknowingly, they themselves became monsters—this Vist Foundation Cardeas spoke of was

like this. That was why he installed the Laplace Program inside the "Unicorn" and used it as the marker leading to the "Box". Whether I'm blood related or not, I received this machine through mere coincidence. Even if he tells me do what I should do, I don't know what to think. I just want to save Audrey. I don't have the strength to bear this world…

"Don't think too much."

Daguza said, seemingly throwing a stone at the surface of the lake, and Banagher recovered as he turned his eyes to the other man.

"Just concentrate on piloting this thing and help us with our investigations. No matter what the "Box" really is, it's not worth exchanging the future of a child like you."

Amongst all the words Banagher heard up till now, this line was definitely the most shocking. Banagher suspected whether the other man's mouth really moved this way as he stared at Daguza's face seriously. Daguza awkwardly looked away and said gruffly, "Focus on looking in front."

"Our target's a debris that's not as large as a battleship. It'll soon come close once we detect it. Watch out."

After saying that, Daguza never looked at Banagher, and did not intend to talk. "I understand." Banagher said as his lips curled up, and he felt relaxed as he looked forward. *As the Captain said, Daguza was not a thorough robot. If such a person exists, there won't be any problems if we hand the "Box" over to the Federation.* Banagher mindlessly thought about this as he felt the heavy pressure

striking him fade somewhat, but felt really puzzled by the lack of constancy the man showed.

If the Daguza who said this line was real, the Daguza who would use hostages without regret for a mission would be real as well. He had a nature hidden under his oppositely opposite iron mask, and used his own sense of responsibility to restrain the resentfulness he could not show to others. Banagher felt repulsed by this kind of adult, but he felt that somewhere in his heart, there existed a recognition for Daguza.

This was one of the 'fetters'—it was difficult to identity who were true to their hearts, but if he could not trust this kind of thing , what could he use to judge something in the future? He had to believe in the bonds between people and get ready to trust others. He could not trust like how he did so when facing Riddhe, and perhaps it was a hallucination created due to the euphoria during the battle, just like how it was from that 'resonance' with Marida. *If I were a real Newtype, I should be able to see through the true nature of others and understand them perfectly.*

The Earth merely showed its face in the night, and Banagher held onto the control sticks again as he shut off all meaningless thoughts.

Part 13

23.55. The debris of "Laplace" could be detected from a point in the vacuum, and in an instant, it became a huge block that filled the sights of the all-view monitor. Banagher continued to take note of the height meter and the speedometer as he gradually reduced

the relative velocity of the “Unicorn” with “Laplace” and let it approach the let debris.

The ring-shaped construct fragment in front of him used to be a living area, and it was 40m long in diameter and approximately 130m in length. It was large, and the word “Laplace’ could be seen on the remaining outer wall. The pillars that poked out like whale ribs and the shattered glass that was used to retain light were the only visible things left of its past glory. It was thorough devastation, and there was no other way to describe this relied. This cosmic dust that filled the space gathered like sand in the wind, and the word “Laplace” became hard to determine, and this image was very consistent with the aged ruins.

The inside was hollow, and it was not too difficult for a machine to slip in. Banagher took note not to touch the metal frames and pillars that were extended out as he let the “Unicorn” dive inside the ring. If the “Unicorn” carelessly knocked into a construct, the debris ferrying it would slow down, and may cause the balance between “Laplace” and Earth’s gravity to collapse. It had become old and weak, but there was no guarantee that the debris could burn completely if it entered the atmosphere, and there was no need to imagine what would happen if a thing of such mass fell onto the surface. “Don’t touch anything.” Daguza said with a suppressed voice, and Banagher cautiously moved the machine. Soon, the relative velocity with the machine and the debris became zero, and the “Unicorn” moved into this hollow that was reminiscent of a whale’s stomach before ceasing all movements.

In the past, the ring would be lit by the sunlight through the reflective mirrors, and there was a centrifuge gravity at the same

level as that of the Moon created within, but the scene inside at this point was at such a state where it would be an understatement to call it dilapidated. It was a large scrap of metal formed by twisted and deformed materials, ripped walls, and beams that were exposed to vacuum for almost 100 years. *To think that it would be abandoned in such a place—no, it's because it's this place that they can put it here, is it?* The all-view monitor image that switched to the actual footage was optically corrected, and Banagher tried to look around the debris. The shattered remains of lighting glass showed a reflection of the "Unicorn"s white body, and it looked so mysterious it was like a ghost looking back at him.

"Even if we compare with the past camera records, there aren't any obvious differences we can see. It's really hard to imagine that someone would do something to it…"

Daguza said slowly as he compared the current image with the data from the computer at his hands. It seemed that the debris was not touched by anyone ever since it was treated as a relic and had warning lights set around it. "Then, are the coordinates the most important thing?" Banagher asked.

"I don't know. Even though we let the machine pass through the given coordinates, nothing happened. If the Laplace Program can identify the shape of this debris, we might hae to let the machine reach the given coordinates together with it…"

Daguza's unspecified words caused Banagher's stomach to hurt . He could imagine what was not mentioned. The Laplace Program would show the information about the "Box" through the activation of the NT-D. if that were the case, arriving at this given

space coordinates would not trigger anything. Banagher could also predict that if he did not activate the NT-D, he would not be able to progress onto the next step.

He gathered the depressed feeling deep within his mind as fuel, and it felt his body and mind would become like a reactor core that would explode continuously—no matter what happened, Banagher did not want to ride on this gadget that would transform into a "Gundam". He looked down and held onto the control sticks, "I said that you shouldn't think too much." but a voice caused him to look up.

"The answer will come. We just have to wait inside this debris and float to the given coordinates."

Daguza said, and in front of his sights, the clock on the display board showed 23.58. There were less than 2 minutes until the debris of "Laplace" moved to its given coordinates, but either way, the NT-D would not activate at will. Banagher wiped away the sweat on his forehead, and held his breath as he waited for that moment.

The two "ReZELs" that were on standby outside the debris looked like they gulped too, waiting for events to develop. The two "Lotos" that got away from its back circled around the debris, taking footages of the exterior of "Laplace", and the floodlights installed on the shoulders would shine inside the debris from time to time. "Make it as detailed as possible, carry out observations from the outside. If there are any changes, report to me." Daguza

notified the allied unit, and Conroy answered, (Roger that. Nothing abnormal for now.) There was still 30 seconds until it reached the target point.

20 seconds, 15 seconds, Daguza started to count down when there was less than 10 seconds left, "8, 7, 6…" the voice caused the atmosphere inside the cockpit to tense up. Latitude 0, longitude 0, midnight; the time left before this moment was—

"3, 2, 1…target reached point zero."

The clock and the display board both showed zero, and the date was changed to 15th April. The machine's functions were normal, and there was no anomaly confirmed on the outside. The debris of "Laplace" remained dead silent just like a second ago.

The latitude, longitude and time numbers were indicated on the digital display, and the moment the three zeros crossed each other ended. 5 seconds after the time was shown, Banagher tried to look behind. The space of the given coordinates did not show any change even after it floated behind. Earth continued to remain in the slumber of night, and there was only an endless vacuum on the low orbit.

So nothing happened in the end. "So, what happened…?" In response to Daguza's question, Banagher continued to look around with a calmed expression as he answered, "Even if you ask , there's still nothing…" Daguza continued to show an emotionless expression as he asked with a calm expression, "Any changes on the outside?" (Negative, there's no change with the "Unicorn" and the relic.) Conroy answered. During this time, Daguza checked all

the sensors and compared the current situation with past footage, but once the relic was 200km away from the designated location, he exhaled.

"Did Cardeas Vist pull a fast one on us…?"

Daguza rubbed his eyes and rubbed his shoulders with his hands. Banagher saw him give that slightly wry look as his tense emotions relaxed. He seemed relaxed by it, and felt strangely emotional that this was more puzzling than before, and looked up at the space from past the pillar that was uprooted. The actual sight of space was near total darkness, and without the various information indicated on the monitor, it would be easy to forget that this was space.

The bright starry lights entered his eyes, but even though they were bright, they could not overcome the abyss of darkness. *How memorable*, this term suddenly appeared in Banagher's mind, and just as he was wondering why he would have some a random thought from nowhere, he noticed that noise was coming from the speakers inside his helmet, and he could hear a soft speaking voice mixed in it.

(…Greetings…citizens of Earth and Space…I'm the Prime Minister of the Earth Federation, Ricardo Marcenas.)

This voice that came through the noise increased in clarity. Banagher widened his eyes in surprise as he looked around aimlessly. He, together with Daguza who was looking around the cockpit, met each other in the eyes. Both of them showed frozen looks for just a moment, "Where's that voice coming from?"

Daguza questioned with a sharp tone, and Banagher hurriedly reached for the display board.

(The end of A.D. is nigh, and we shall enter an unknown territory called Universal Century. During this momentous time…)

As Banagher operated on the wireless electronic panel to check where the message came from, Conroy's voice interrupted, (Where 's this voice coming from?). It seemed that the other machines were hearing this 'voice' as well. "I don't know. You guys can't detect the source of this signal?" as Daguza asked behind him, Banagher summoned out all the communication channels onto the display, and he scanned all the communication channels, ranging from short frequency to long frequency, including optical signals, but after scanning through them, he still could not find any information that matched this 'voice'.

(And right now, for us, who have achieved the longstanding desire to unify the world, we have defined the errors in Nationalism. Just as humans can't exist on their own, we know that countries can't operate alone.)

(RX-0, the relic's giving off a broadcast. Can you detect the source ?)

The broadcast Mihiro made overlapped with the voice of an unknown man at this point. "It's coming from the relic?" Daguza wondered, and Banagher again looked at the all-view monitor showing the inner walls of the relic. The system had already done all sorts of scans with its sensors. The "Nahel Argama" could detect this voice even from 200km away, and it was really hard to

imagine that such a powerful electronic signal could be hidden amongst this thoroughly dilapidated ruin. In fact, even the sensors on the "Unicorn" were not showing the existence of this wireless signal.

It's like the voice of a dead person— Banagher felt goosebumps all over his body as he gulped. (This situation…there's no doubt.) Conroy's gruff voice caused the speakers to tremor unsteadily.

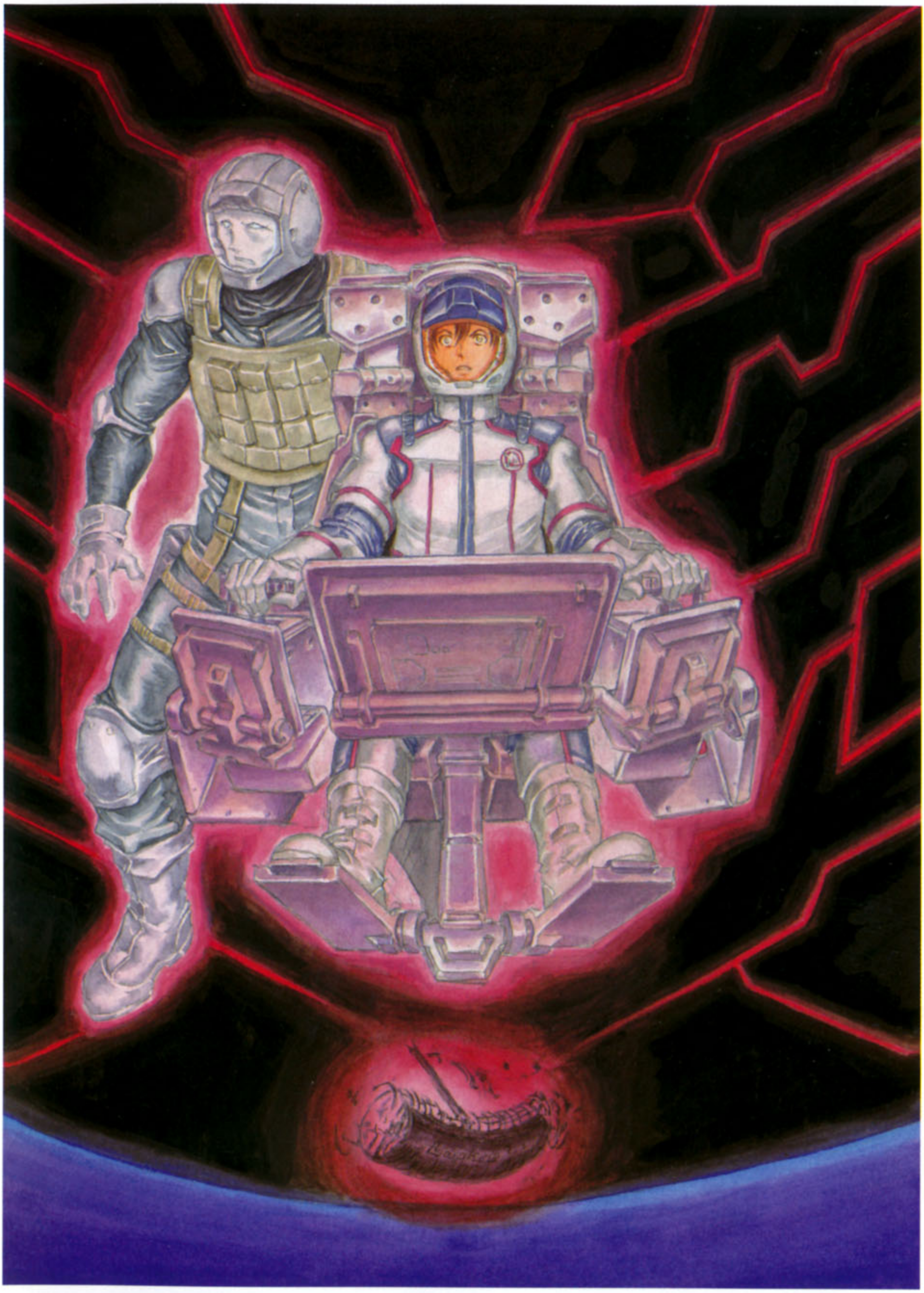
(We can detect from here that the source is the "Unicorn". The " Unicorn" used up all the channels to let out this voice…!)

The "Loto" floating at the other end of the beam showed how shaken its passengers were as its stout body trembled. Daguza could not say anything, and Banagher suddenly felt that his presence was distant as his hands that let go of the control sticks were frozen, unable to move. He could not catch up to this situation in front of him, and he could not bring himself to carry out the rational action of checking on the system as he continued to hear the voice of the ghost ringing in his helmet.

(The migration shall begin officially, and many people living in space colonies will be the norm in future generations. This glorious result of humanity uniting together, is to save the Earth from us crushing it.)

(I heard of this in a history program. This was the speech the assassinated Prime Minister Ricardo made.)

(I've checked. This dialogue is exactly the same as the one in the library. What we're hearing now is the Prime Minister speech before the "Laplace Incident" happened…"



では、その次は――？　答えられないバナージを見つめ、〈ラプラス〉の亡霊が嗤う。《ユニコーン》の一角がゆらりと持ち上がり、白い装甲の継ぎ目から赤い光が滲み始めた。（本文より）

Conroy and Mihiro's excited voices overlapped this 'voice'. Almost 100 years ago, the first Prime Minister of the Federation government made this speech from "Laplace"—but it was blown up because of a terrorist attack, and this voice would be the ghost that was still floating between space and Earth. "Is this the doing of the Laplace Program…?" Banagher could no longer hear Daguza mutter as he understood that this 'voice' that was ringing inside his helmet and drilling through his cranium was seeping deep into his consciousness. It was opening a door that he could not open on his own, one he never opened, and this 'voice' that was overflowing with discourse gradually filled his consciousness.

(If Anno Domini was really the infancy of humanity, then the Universal Century shall be the next state. We're not lowering the population through birth control, but chose to open more space for the population to move.)

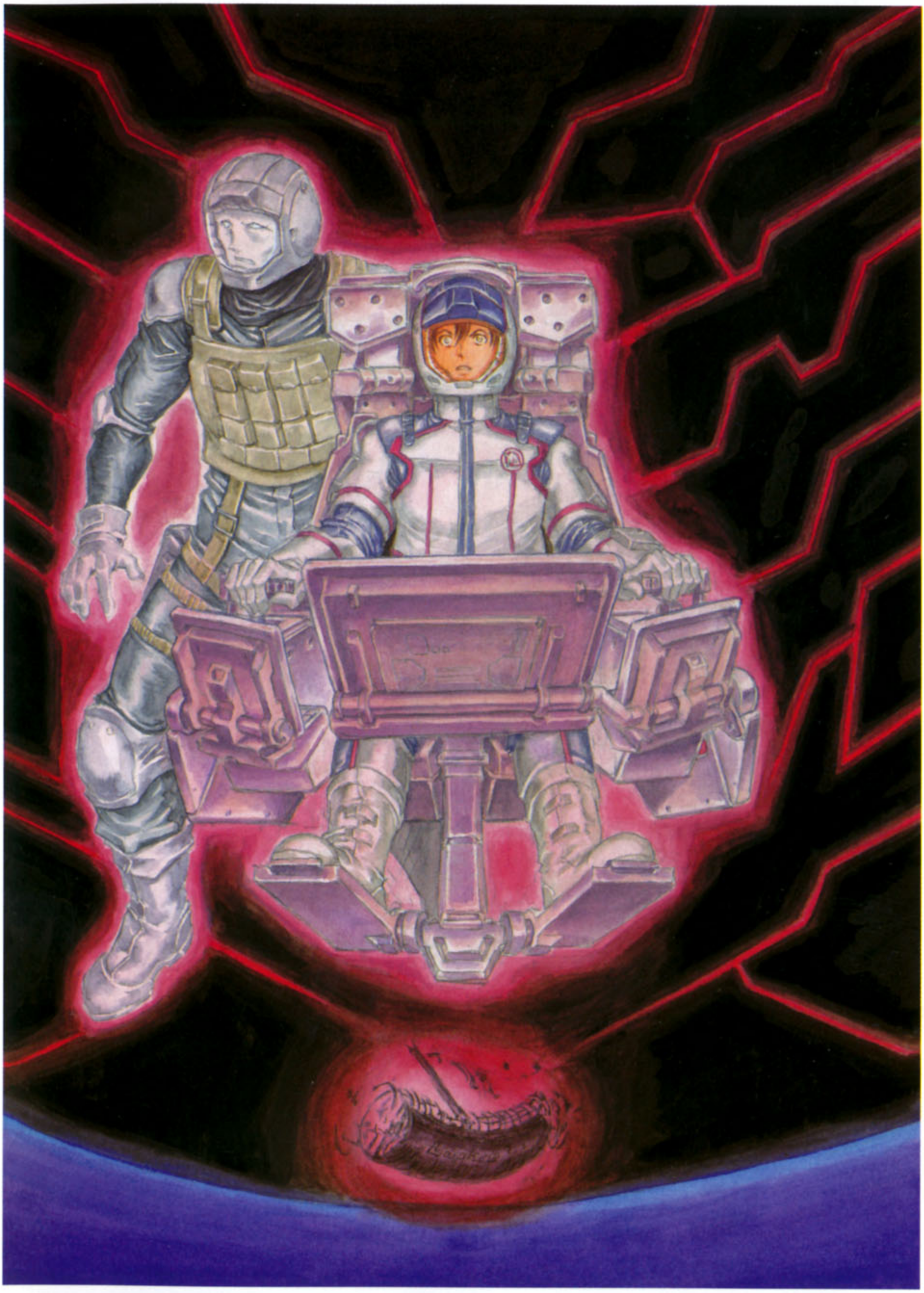
That's right, the Earth Federation government was set up for this. Banagher confirmed. It was an emergency aid organization in charge of ceasing all conventions and eliminating those who defy it. The Federation was given the largest authority in history, and in that sense, it could be said that it was a god created by humanity, the symbolism of absolute…but what exactly would a God be? Was He a concept created by humanity, an existence that resided in people's hearts? A certain person said before that He was possibility, the source of power that separated humanity from the many species of animals, the source of power that allowed humanity to step into space. This was a great power that was used

to create their ideals, and to approach their ideals. Humanity created lots of sacrifices and fulfilled the possibility of an absolute government—

(A baby that climbs out of the cradle must continue to grow. In the process of fulfilling the plan to migrate to space, we're proving to the entire world that we can co-exist for one goal. Then, what's next?)

The 'voice' continued to ask, but there was no answer. *We still remain in the possibility that we created 100 years ago. Even until now, we still can't get out of the cradle, and we can't face this God called possibility.* The overflowing words gathered on Banagher's forehead, and radiated out as a thin flash, and he felt his consciousness *fly*. Everything around him, from Daguza who was seated beside him, to his body that was seated on the linear chair, became hard to identify. At the other end of the radiating light, Banagher saw a hallucination of the 'voice's owner smiling back at him.

Then, what's next—? The ghost of Laplace showed a mocking smile at Banagher who was unable to answer. The lone horn of the "Unicorn" rose up slightly, and a red glow started to seep out from the gaps between the white armor.



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Chapter 3

Part 1

(Universal Century. In ordinary terms it means 'A Century for everyone'. The age of outer space should be written as 'Universe Century', but we deliberately used the word 'Universal', which means 'for all', as the name for the new century.)

Marida's hearing that was dulled by the anaesthesia picked up this calm but determined voice. She opened her eyes slightly, and saw the ceiling inside the ship connector.

The fluorescent panels that were lined up in intervals continued to glide by Marida's eyes, and the slow-flowing air struck her face. She moved her slightly numb hand, realized that she was fastened down on the zero-gravity use stretcher, and gathered her sights that were focused on both left and right eyes. The men wearing white normal suits were surrounding the stretchers, moving along the connector to somewhere else. At this point, this group of people looked like they were paramedics sending an injured sportsman, but none of them were focusing on the patient. Those faces were obviously showing strange looks as they looked forward, silently letting the lift grips pull them forward. The pistols grips on the men's waist holsters showed that they were definitely not related to any medical work in any sense.

Marida originally thought that they were conversing with each other, but that was not the case. The 'voice' she heard came from

the internal wireless speakers of the helmet. *Who's the one talking? She swallowed her saliva that had some bitterness of the anaesthesia and pricked her eyes to hear this 'voice' that sounded like someone's speech. However, another person's voice "You're saying that the message came from the "Unicorn"? caused her face to twitch.*

"I'm saying this alright. The machine started to let out this signal once they made contact with the debris of "Laplace"."

"Did the Laplace Program unseal itself? How's the NT-D?"

"I don't sense any activation of the NT-D here…"

Marida turned her eyes to the source of this voice. From the back of the normal suit, she saw a man with a fat face tensing up. *They are not crew members of this "Nahel Argama". If I remember correctly, that man from Anaheim Electronics is called Alberto.* She felt her head aching somewhat as she recalled these scenes, and closed her eyes for the time being. She had not recovered completely, and the effects of the anaesthetic did not fade off completely. However, it seemed that the fastening belts on the stretchers were not secured that tightly, and she gradually clenched her fists to awaken her still sleepy body. She then widened her eyes and looked around.

From the area she could see, she saw Alberto and 3 other men who looked like his henchmen. They were probably heading to the shuttle that was linking over, and from what she heard before she fell asleep, it seemed that she would be brought to Earth together with this group of people. If she were detained in a military facility , the chances of her escaping would become even more difficult.

Marida did not think that she could survive and make it all the way back to the Neo Zeon camp, but if she were injected with drugs and revealed information she should not say, she would end up putting her master and everyone else in a pinch, and she had to prevent that no matter what. She twitched her body that was in the worker normal suit, checked on her thoroughly hurting body due to her injuries, realized that she was not completely immobile, and started to observe the men's actions.

The men seemed to have swallowed the opinion of the military doctor who said that Marida would be unable to wake up for half a day, and did not pay attention to her. *Can I take down such numbers? As Marida held her breath and asked herself, "What should we do? Do we delay the launch and hear out the outcome of the investigations?" a subordinate asked, and Alberto's back shuddered as he held onto the lift grip.*

"Continue to keep contact with the bridge. Call the captain of the "Klimt" and tell him and we may change our departure time according to how things develop."

"Yes." The subordinate answered as he stepped on the floor and moved back Alberto, who muttered, "What kind of joke is this…" without looking at the other person. His voice echoed through the corridor, and Marida saw that he seemed to be terrified from behind as she heard that 'voice' from the broadcast inside the ship. She suddenly recalled Banagher's name and looked up at the ceiling.

It was said that this 'voice' came from the "Unicorn". *Is he called to be the pilot again?* Marida relaxed her tense body as she let her

consciousness float towards that 'voice'. She closed her eyes and tried to catch the pulsation of the "Unicorn", but felt an icy feeling suddenly pierce through her chest.

She could not help but widen her eyes, and her fingers stiffened at this point. A certain presence was rising up from below the fall, passing through the normal suit and the stretcher, and she clearly felt goosebumps that rose from the skin on her back. This presence did not come from the "Unicorn", and it was not from that 'voice'. Another thing was approaching. Someone was staring at the " Nahel Argama" with killing intent.

Marida knew that this was not a term she should be saying as a prisoner, but she could not find any other term to describe this sharp 'presence'. Her body that was lying tense on the stretcher traced the certain person's presence rising from her back as she gathered her concentration that was wandering around in space, and then chose the words that formed in her heart.

The enemy's here—

Part 2

(As humans need to reside in outer space, it's important for all of humanity to unite together. We can't let this miracle… become a special occasion…)

The noise started to mix in amongst the voices, proving more than

anything else that an enemy was approaching. Otto restrained his inner heart that felt horror as he loudly asked the crew, "Minovsky Particles, you say!?"

"The density is rising rapidly. It's not an interfering wave."

The sensor operator seated at the left console seat added on as he looked over at Otto. Minovsky Particles were detected inside the ship, and it was not scattered here from a trading ship somewhere as a precaution against pirates. Someone was definitely releasing Minovsky Particles in this area to cover the eyes of the "Nahel Argama". *To think that we'll end up with an enemy attack at such a time.* Otto exchanged glances with Liam and immediately asked the sensor operator, "Where's the source?"

"Unable to confirm. The spreading pattern is still unstable. It seemed that the Minovsky radar caught interference."

"What about the motion sensor?"

"There's no response in the sensor range. No heat signature either." The enemy launched an electronic battle from outside the detectable range, and the Minovsky radar failed because of the enemy. There was no room for suspicion in this current situation, and Otto used the reflexes he honed during this past week, " PREPARE FOR ANTI-AIR BATTLE!" he yelled, and the voice echoed through the bridge.

"All personnel, put on your normal suits and prepare for battle. Prepare the cannons. The enemy may be hiding amongst the surrounding civilian ships. Carry out tight anti-air surveillance.

We should be able to detect the location of all the ships from the radar information."

But even so, hundreds of ships continued to move around on the Earth's orbit. The "Nahel Argama" could not easily pick up the enemy's location, and it could not expect to fight a decent defensive battle while being thoroughly battered. Otto heard the repeated instructions and alarm sounds as he muttered to himself, "What kind of enemy is there…" Liam received the normal suit from the duty soldier as she coolly answered him, "I don't think there'll be many of them here."

"Besides, this is the absolute defense zone of Earth. Even if the enemy's disguised as a merchant ship, it probably won't have the fighting strength of a fleet to invade."

"That's the problem. Since they're willing to fight us with few numbers, they probably came up with some plan."

Liam, who was putting on her normal suit, stopped what she was doing as she gave Otto a stunned reaction. Otto too felt a little troubled that he spoke with the tone of a very experienced commander as he avoided Liam in the eyes, asking, "Where are our allies location?" Liam zippered up the fastener of her normal suit as she answered,

"The patrol fleet is on duty, but they're retreating towards the geostationary orbit. Even if we immediately ask them for aid, it's hard to tell whether they can reach in 30 minutes.

"30 minutes… if this were an enemy raid, it'll be over by the time they arrive."

Doesn't matter what the result is now. Otto added on in his heart as he too received the normal suit and turned to Mihiro at the communication operator seat, saying, "Call back the scouting scout."

"Once they return, call Romeo 010 and 012 to cover the mothership. The ECOAS' "Loto" probably can be used as cannons, so do tell them as well."

"Yes… then, what about the "Unicorn"?"

Mihiro put on her helmet, returned to her seat and gave a meek expression at Otto. From an objective viewpoint, the "Unicorn" would clearly be the most powerful fighting force the ship had. Otto felt words that were stuck in his throat, and he pulled up the fastener of the normal suit in one go, "Tell him to remain on standby inside the colony." He answered while avoiding the other party's stare.

"That mobile suit is still releasing that ridiculous speech. Hurry up and let it retreat back inside before it becomes a live target for the enemy."

We can't let the kid help in this battle anymore. "Roger that", Otto saw Mihiro answer "Roger" as she turned her face back to the console, and he looked back onto the screen in front before remorse rose in him. The debris of "Laplace" was ferrying the "

Unicorn" over the Southern Hemisphere of Earth, and for every second passed, it would pull away from the "Nahel Argama" that was located on the equator. The electric noise that was mixed in with the speech seemed to be leaving together with the old Prime Minister residence.

Less than 100 years ago, the voice of the first Prime Minister of the Federation government was released all over the world. Ignoring what kind of relation this speech actually had with the " Laplace Box", these would definitely be difficult to listen to at this point when times had changed. *Unknown world, brand new century, humanity that managed to create a united government called the Earth Federation*— Otto continued to digest on those words, and he heard someone say, "How ironic" before it was overwhelmed by the loud sound of the alarms.

"A glorious outcome created when all of humanity is united… we, who're living under such a result, are still killing each other."

Liam's voice sounded ever so vicious, and Otto had no reply for her as he put on the helmet of his normal suit without saying anything. The voice that announced the start of the Universal Century did not stop completely as it continued to remain beneath the noise and rang through the wireless radio.

Part 3

(We must normalize that fact that humanity has united, not rejecting each other, not hating each other, and become one race as we head to a wider universe. The term Universal Century includes our hopes.)

The beating of the heart was responding to the 'voice' of the ghost. Was it his own heartbeat, or was it the "Unicorn"? Or was it neither, but the beating from the universe itself as the owner of the 'voice' merged into it…?

Banagher could not understand. However, he felt that there was another him deep within that he did not know of, responding to the 'voice'. He understood that the body that was becoming one with the machine was pulsating, and the thoughts within him were radiating out in all directions. *Right, the Universal Century was supposed to be a Century full of possibilities*—Banagher's pulsating thoughts muttered as he started to listen to the voice that was coming out from within him.

That kind of possibility could allow humanity to ascend as a higher form of existence in the next phase. The owner of this 'voice ' knew how much blood humanity shed for this path, and had to leave his own prayer to the next generation even though they did not know what kind of possibilities awaited them at all.

"It's because we don't understand that we draw it out, and then we ponder on it. Humans are the only ones granted with such an ability."

The large tapestry appeared in space, and the gathering shadows seemed to form the silhouette of Cardeas. It was one of the six tapestries hung in the Vist residence, the piece called the ' tent'. A lady was in front of the tent that had the words 'my only

wish' on it and, and put her ornament into the "Box" the servant girl was holding. A lion and a unicorn were on both sides, looking like they were ready to guide the lady into the tent—

"There's a certain sense the five senses can't comprehend…and it exceeds the senses we have now…maybe that is the existence they called God, or maybe that is an illusion created by humanity's wishes. But if we believe in that existence and can do what the world does, there is a chance to turn it into reality."

A glow was radiating from the tent, and the unicorn that was floating gradually in space surrounded the "Unicorn". As many people believed in its existence and loved it, this legendary beast was born. Humans could tame this beast, and as for whether it really existed, it already did not matter—this prose of an old poem passed through Banagher's thoughts.

"Whether it's right or not isn't important. To them, this light is important. They needed something to fight despair and live in this world that was cruel and binding. They needed something to believe that this world still has room for change."

The silhouette then took the form of Marida as she looked up at the man crucified on the Cross, saying that. They put their hopes into the future… as a prayer to make up for their sins in the past, and to comfort themselves at that this point. Perhaps they, the people who were determined to migrate into space, were most probably hurt, and were the ones who were forced to despair. This emotional state caused them to create this arrogant god called the Federation, and they left their directions to this god. That was why these people had to complain that there was no hope that existed,

and passed on the possibility to the next generation. It was just like what Cardeas did, and that certain person who got the "Box" 100 years ago."

"In the past, Zeon Deikun once said that only those people who came to space could head for innovation. This meant that humanity got used to its environment and evolved…Newtypes. To the bureaucrats who sending the leftover population to space and remained on Earth, this thinking itself basically toppled their standpoint. That's why they suppressed Zeonism and Side 3 that was promoting it."

The silhouette swayed again, becoming Full Frontal's mask in space. The cold voice that described reality echoed in Banagher's thoughts.

"The Zeon Republic had such a crime, and after a year's war, it fell defeated. However, this helped the Federation's call, causing the Earth Central Administration to expand every day. To break the shackle of the Federation, to fulfill self-autonomy for Spacenoids, we should—"

Banagher could understand these words, and he too felt that this was correct. *But is there a certain something that is lacking?* he felt a sense of anxiety, and he felt that the more someone insisted on it, the more likely it would be to be distant from possibilities. But what was this feeling, the feeling of the head smashing itself against the wall? Why was it that this voice that deemed prayers as merely prayers, and possibilities as possibilities forever, felt so cold?

Whether it actually existed, that's not the issue here. There are cases of trust being nurtured and affecting reality. The Unicorn, the beast of

possibilities; me, and us, we're all waiting for something in the future. I want to see the future the owner of this 'voice' says as we carry the possibilities of humanity heading into the future—

THUMP. THBUMP. THUMP. The scattered memories and the excerpts of words let out a pulsating feeling, gradually connecting the nerves that were not connected. A certain something sleeping in the "Unicorn" sensed this connection, and the glow of the Psycoframe was emitted out from the gaps between the armor. THUMP, THUMP…a forceful and rhythmic beating felt like blood flowing through the human body. It felt like the body temperature that was granted knowledge and blood increased, and the heat felt like it was expanding to the endless time and space…

At that moment.

There was an icy co0ld and sharp 'presence' growing inside this time and space, and the pulsating sound dissipated. Banagher widened his eyes and saw the all-view monitor visuals in his sights of reality.

There was a 'presence' pressurizing the body and mind, gathering gradually on the other end of the dilapidated debris, on the horizontal contour on the Earth. It was a 'presence' approaching from the darkness, a 'presence' that appeared to hurt others. Banagher's body detected this as it moved on its own, and he held onto the control stick again. The originally still "Unicorn" lifted its head at this moment, and the bladed antenna suddenly rose up. The glow from the Psycoframe that was rising between the gaps scattered, and the white machine moved around amidst the debris.

(I don't belong to any religion, but I'm not an atheist. I believe that a healthy representation of the human spirit would be to ascend to a higher plane, to give laws to ourselves, as we set higher bars for ourselves.)

With lightning-quick reflexes, Banagher moved his limbs and immediately held onto the control stick while stepping on the pedal. The main thrusters on the back and legs let out flares together, and the "Unicorn" that suddenly started to advance dashed out of the debris of "Laplace". The G-force that came right from the front caused Daguza to lower his head, and he was pressed down on the assistance seat without having the time to ready himself.

"Banagher…!?"

"Something's coming over. It's targeting the "Nahel Argama"."

Banagher left these words behind and turned his face forward without hesitation. Daguza inspected the display board and quickly scanned through all the meters. The "Unicorn" let out thruster flares in the opposite direction of where "Laplace" was headed, and immediately negated the orbital speed. It then accelerated at a height near the atmosphere as it gradually pushed itself such that it would return back to the equatorial orbit. This was a reckless action that completely relied on the great power of the thrusters, but in another sense, this was a clever action done with ample knowledge of the machine's capaibilities.

There were no alert signs on the screen, and all systems were normal. Until this point, the speech of the First Prime Minister had not stopped, and the signal from the wireless communicator continued to persist on. However, there was nothing to suspect whether the pilot was conscious or not.

"…Are you alright?" Daguza looked over at Banagher's face. There was no response of any machine on the radar, and the space on the all-view monitor was dead silent. "I don't know. We might not make it in time." Banagher answered as he continued to stare at the space where the "Nahel Argama" should be at.

"That's not what I'm saying here. I'm asking about your body condition. Did you just…"

Just lose your consciousness? No, did you consciousness fly out there once? Daguza could not find any term that could describe this as he turned his speechless face away from Banagher. Soon after the speech started to play, Banagher looked like his soul was taken, and he did not respond at all. Also, the glow from the psycoframe started to fill the cockpit, and the machine that activated the NT-D still showed signs of 'transforming' despite there not being any enemies on the radar. It felt like it sensed the anomaly on Banagher and created a resonance.

Did the psycoframe on the machine react to the pilot? Or did the psycowaves of the pilot activate the system? Either way, the NT-D was silent at this point, and the "Unicorn" continued to

glide under low orbit in its unicorn form. Daguza bit his lips and looked back at the debris of Laplace, (bridge to all mobile squad), Mihiro's voice could be heard.

(Abandon the current mission immediately and return to the mothership. We have detected Minovsky particles now. There's a very likely chance that its scattered to disrupt the enemy. I repeat …)

Daguza turned his face forward in surprise. The radar screen that was linked to the navigation control satellite had noise all over it, indicating the fact that the electronic waves caught interference. The noise from the wireless radio got worse and worse, and the voices of Conroy and the rest yelling something seemed so distant. The laser communication from the "Nahel Argama" still remained, but the reception from the other channels decreased. The effective radius of all the sensors were limited by the interference of the Minovsky Particles.

Everything was still normal several seconds ago. Did this guy detect the enemy's presence before the Minovsky Particles were scattered? Daguza felt a shiver as he looked at the side of Banagher's face. His heart then jumped hard the moment he heard the shout, " THEY'RE HERE…!"

Banagher continued to look in front without looking aside as he narrowed his eyes and gave a killing intent. *At the distance out of the sensor radius range, the "Nahel Argama" can determine where the enemy was from the laser signals, but this guy seems like he can detect the enemies further than that.* "How many can you sense?" Daguza asked in a half-believing manner, and Banagher answered him

without looking back, “There’s one…no, that’s not it. There’s another independent squad hiding behind it.”

“Behind…?”

At this point, Daguza was really stunned. He knew that it was useless, but he still looked over at where Banagher was staring at. He stared at the dark blue space that was CG drawn, and he again felt an ominous feeling before looking back at the side of that face seated beside him.

It was said that Newtypes could detect an enemy’s presence through the mobile suit armor and fight while predicting each other’s movements. Daguza had no intention of doubting if a sixth sense really existed, and he had personally experienced the threat of psycommu weapons, but he had no idea whether such monstrous-like humans really existed. He wanted to cast proof to deny it, but he could not do it. He turned around and saw a pink beam flying through the darkness.

A beam came flying in from the space behind the “Nahel Argama” that was moving around the equatorial orbit, and it grazed past the “Unicorn” before being sucked in by Earth that was showing its night appearance. It was the glow of the mega-particle cannon…but it was not sniping at the “Nahel Argama”. The enemy sublight shots came flying one after another as they aimed for the debris of “Laplace” moving on the axis orbit. To be accurately, the enemy was sniping from long distance, outside the range of the sensor, at the “Nahel Argama” mobile suit squad stopped there.

Even if the enemy did not know where the mobile suits were, it was possible to predict the location of the "Laplace" debris that was maintaining a steady speed. Thus, it was not difficult to shoot at the debris. It was merely 10 seconds since the moment the retreat order was given, so Conroy and the rest should still be hovering in the debris, planning how to change their trajectory. " They're aiming for the mobile suit squad…do they intend to isolate the "Nahel Argama?" Daguza mused as he looked at Banagher's face. He, who sensed the enemy's location first, looked right in front this time as he did not move. Even the beams that glided past him did not cause him to show signs of fears.

If he was a step slower in changing the course, the "Unicorn" will be affected by this long-range snipe and end up tangled amongst the debris of "Laplace". *As I guessed, this guy can see something I can't see.* There was no room for doubt anymore as Daguza looked over at where the beams came flying in from. He could not detect the enemy's presence, and he felt his own anxiousness as he even thought of cursing out at this speech that continued to play.

Part 4

(During the Anno Domini Era, these Holy Scriptures were spread from man to man. Even without mentioning the Ten Commandments of Moses, every religion teaches doctrines on how people should live and face the Earth. These weren't viewed as human words, but rather as a contract with God.)

The beam launcher shot had its power suppressed and the charge

time set to the minimum as it looked like a slender and sharp claw that was about to scratch the night face of Earth. As the trail scattered, another beam came flying by, drawing scratches on the place where the “Laplace” debris was. It was not easy to hit, but for the mobile suit squad that was scattered around the debris, this kind of attack was enough to cause a threat.

Gilboa’s squad did manage to stop the enemy in their tracks. Gael Chan felt that he would not meet any resistance any further, checked on the laser link with the “Garencieres”, and his lips curled up.

“I never thought I’ll have Zeon covering me…”

And I’m attacking a Federation ship of all opponents. Gael felt that it was really odd as he stared at the ship body of the “Nahel Argama ” on the enlarged window. As the estimate marker and the CG visuals overlapped each other, it was still possible to detect the shape of the ship even if the machine was outside the sensor rang. The “Nahel Argama”, which lost its portside catapult, floated on the space above the equator, and looked like a sphinx with a missing left foreleg. It was a mobile suit mothership that was very similar to the “White Base” of the past. As he stared at this white ship body that could not even fire any anti-air fire, Gael checked on whether the Minovsky radar was working, and then cautiously suppressed the speed o the “Eye-Zack”. As he slowed down, the machine descended, and the “Eye-Zack” that got onto the rendezvous orbit approached the “Nahel Argama” as every second, every minute passed.

In space, where there were no conductive substances, it was possible to guess the source of the Minovsky Particles through the diffusion thickness and the spread. The device in charge of this would be the Minovsky radar. With that, it was possible to detect the enemy's location amidst the Minovsky Particle wave and prevent pre-emptive attacks. However, electronic related methods could nullify the electronic equipment, and this "Eye-Zack" that was enhanced in electronic warfare was equipped with such functions. Currently, the Minovsky radar on the "Nahel Argama" was confused by the irregular spread, and even the "Garencieres" could not grasp its position. Gael would use this opening and close in to a minimum distance where the optical sensors could not detect, and take action in one go. The "Eye-Zack" was obviously inferior in terms of mobility and generator output as compared to the current mobile suits, but it would only take an instant to determine the winner if it were a distance when both sides could see each other. He just had to approach the enemy first without the enemy noticing him.

"I don't have any grudges with you…but I still have to repay this debt."

With the night of Earth as the background, the footage showed the white ship that was a pin size at best. Gael touched the Firearms Control System panel and readied the live ammunition weapon that was commonly called the modified Zaku machine gun at a position to shoot. Once he shoots, his position would be detected by the enemy, so he chose not to concentrate his fire. As he was about to squeeze the trigger, the battle sequence program started to count down in seconds. Suddenly, he saw the all-view

monitor in front of him dyed completely white, and two tremors shook the cockpit as the machine rattled and cried.

"What's going on…?"

The scattered particles of the beam hit the exterior armor of the "Eye-Zack", causing the cockpit to let out noises sounding like it was hit by pebbles. Gael adjusted the machine and pointed the gun at where the beams were flying from. They were not cannon shots from the "Nahel Argama". An enemy was firing high powered beams from another direction. The "Eye-Zack" rolled its monoeye unhurriedly, and as the sensors caught sight of a machine moving over from the Earth at its feet, the message 'data match' was shown and enlarged on the screen together with the CG-corrected enemy visual.

"The "Unicorn"…!?"

The pure white mobile suit, which had the unique trait of the lone horn, wielded its customized beam rifle that was loaded with magnum cartridges as it came crashing in from below. Gael squeezed the trigger on reflex and carried out evasive maneuvers, and the modified Zaku machine gun let out a trail of fire. For every five shots, there was a tracer round inside, and the tracer round let out a light yellow trail. The "Unicorn" looked like it was ready for this attack as it dodged and fired the beam rifle again. The mega-particle cannon that was greatly different from the normal rifles, and a torrent of light rain down on the "Eye-Zack" less than 3km away. The storm of scattered particles again concentrated its fire on the "Eye-Zack", and right at the moment, the damage report window appeared on the monitor.

The extremely hot particles caused the armor to be poked with holes, and the field monitor for the right knee joint indicated that it could not be recovered. *The enemy should be suppressed at this point by the sniping, so why is it that it can get all the way here?* Gael checked on the current situation of the "Eye-Zack" that had its mobility reduced by half, and he bit his lips and glared at the lone horned mobile suit in front to him.

He knew about the overwhelming mobility and the power of the armaments as he took part in the development beforehand. To the "Unicorn", this old generation mobile suit that was very slow in its movements was no different from a scarecrow. *I'll be slaughtered when the next shot comes in*, Gael had no doubt about this prediction as he got mentally prepared to prepare for the third shot. However, the "Unicorn" continued to face the "Eye-Zack" as it did not shoot a beam.

The white machine had the ideal line of fire to catch the enemy, but it lowered its beam rifle somewhat hesitantly. This action was basically a free chance given to the enemy to run away, and it was definitely impossible for the person sitting inside that cockpit to be a normal pilot. *Is the one sitting inside that person?* Gael instinctively thought as he felt a burning feeling in his head, and squeezed the trigger of the machine gun fully.

The large empty cartridge was ejected, and the 120mm bullets that were fired let loose a tail of light at the "Unicorn". The " Unicorn" dodged this attack by adjusting its height, but it did not intend to fight back. The machine, which lost its killing intent, continued to dodge while not wasting its movement, and got in

the way of the "Eye-Zack", only caring about harassing the enemy as it did not let the enemy charge at the mothership. Gael could have broken through if he wanted to—but he was facing an opponent he could not ignore. He understood that he had to do something he did not expect, a foolish act that could ruin the entire plan, but he still used the left arm of the "Eye-Zack" to draw out a beam saber.

Not caring that the machine would leave the rendezvous course , Gael lit the thrusters to slow the "Eye-Zack" down. The machine that was affected by gravity started to descend, and it closed in on the "Unicorn". At that moment, Gael used the chance to swing the beam saber down at the "Eye-Zack".

The "Unicorn" grabbed the grip from the pack on the rear side of the arm, and drew its beam saber. Both sides' beam sabers clashed, creating sparks that lit the place. Gael tried to steady the machine that nearly got knocked aside and used all his strength to yell, "BANAGHER LINKS!"

"WHAT KIND OF FIGHTING IS THIS!? SHOOT DOWN THE ENEMY WHEN YOU CAN DO SO! YOU CAN'T SURVIVE LIKE THIS!"

(What…?) The doubtful voice echoed through the wireless communicator. *No problems here.* Gael vaguely heard the change of era speech from the first Prime Minister too. *It seems that the Laplace Program is successfully acting out the original process as planned.* Gael confirmed this and felt a certain unexpected sense of realism, and he continued to yell at Banagher, "YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DO!"

"YOU HAVE TO FIND THE REAL IDENTITY OF THE "BOX" AND FIND A BETTER WAY TO USE IT. THAT'S THE WILL YOUR FATHER LEFT FOR YOU TO DO WHEN HE LEFT THE " UNICORN" TO YOU!"

(What are you saying!? Who exactly are you!?)

"It doesn't matter who I am! You must continue to live on and carry on the will of your father. I can tell that you have the ability to do this!!"

If that's not the case, the "Unicorn" would not have left the "Laplace" debris at this timing and get in my way. This is what the heavens planned—everything is right at where they should be just as planned. Gael felt amazed by this in less than a second, let the "Eye-Zack" sweep aside the "Unicorn" that only knew how to swing the beam saber with brute force and get by its opponent. (Wait!) Banagher yelled, and the voice of the First Prime Minister's speech faded away.

He tossed out the dummy balloon to hold off the opponent, and let the machine head back on course to the "Nahel Argama". *It doesn't matter if I'm shot from behind now.* He believed that he had someone to believe in in the future, and that he should continue to live in shame forever. This thought he did not have several seconds ago caused him to give a wry smile, and he tried to drag the "Eye-Zack" that was on the brink of death away by exerting the throttle.

"I hope you will not abandon your life. Continue to live on Banagher Links. For your father's sake."

Gael muttered to himself as he rode on the "Eye-Zack" that lit its thrusters. The "Nahel Argama" fired its intercepting fire, and the "Eye-Zack" machine rushed in on the fire trails with reckless abandon.

Part 5

(And now, we're about to say goodbye to the century of Gods and accept the time of a new contract. This time, it's not to surpass God, but to communicate with the God inside us, as we move up to a higher plane. The contract of the Universal Century should be born of all of humanity's consciousness.)

The "Unicorn" used its beam saber to slice apart the dummy balloon that was expanded to the size of a mobile suit, and then aimed the reticule of the rifle at the enemy unit. Banagher squeezed the finger on the trigger lightly, and the silhouette of the enemy unit that looked like it was wearing a radome-like overlapped on where the "Nahel Argama" was. Banagher then moved his finger away from the trigger.

The position of the opponent at this point would mean that the beam would hit the "Nahel Argama". Banagher clicked his tongue as he felt confused by his inner heart feeling relieved that he did not have to fire. ""Nahel Argama", do you copy? Daguza's call at this point caused him to hurriedly grab onto the control stick.

"1 o'clock, Plus 47 degrees. There's an enemy unit approaching you. Hurry up and intercept it."

Daguza did not wait for the ship to reply as he casted a sharp glance at Banagher. Banagher looked away and intended to step on the pedal, 'stop', the voice caused him to stop the machine.

"If you approach now, you'll be caught in the shots from the " Nahel Argama". Go intercept the enemy behind."

Daguza sounded rather stiff. Banagher reflected on what had happened, and this kind of reaction felt reasonable to him. He stared at the "Nahel Argama" that was firing intercepting shots from the monitor, and the dummy balloons that were released continued to explode as they got shot. At this moment, the unknown enemy unit was attacking the ship alone. *For a Neo Zeon pilot, he knows too much about me. Is he someone related to the Foundation? But if that's the case, that person will not sit inside a " Sleeves" mobile suit without reason—*

"He just mentioned your father…did he?"

Daguza mused as he did not look away from the enemy unit that was passing through the concentrated fire. Banagher could not stop his shoulders from shivering.

"What's going on? You—"

The flashes looked like they came with sounds as they radiated from the monitor, overpowering the words Daguza wanted to say next. Banagher and Daguza looked over at where the flashes came

from, and they saw the enemy unit surrounded by flames as it charged at the “Nahel Argama”.

The machine was surrounded by numerous anti-air fire as it became a ball of fire, but it continued to move it. “A special attack …?” Daguza muttered as his face was covered by the light of the fireballs. The enemy unit that was thoroughly hit let out a chain of explosions, and blew up into bits near the battleship. The anti-glare filter could not completely prevent the strong light from filling the cockpit, and Banagher could not help but narrow his eyes.

The booster tank at the back exploded, and the enemy machine that was no longer humanoid was gradually swallowed by the lights of explosions. That heat source soon cooled off due to the vacuum, and then became a blueish-white waste gas as the blown fragments scattered all around the “Nahel Argama”. The frame was the only thing left amongst the twisted wreckage, and there was no signs of an ejection pod being fired out. “Doing such a stupid thing…” Daguza’s voice rang together with the speech, and Banagher stared at the “Nahel Argama” that was enlarged on the window. He saw that the ship and the shuttle that was connected were fine, and felt a heavy feeling he could not shake away.

The enemies’ sniping from long range continued, and though the current situation did not allow for his heart to relax, what was with this uneasy feeling in his chest? That explosion and the scattered debris did not feel realistic. Banagher sensed the sharp ‘ presence’ of that pilot that had not disappeared even till this point.

He harboured this baseless belief as he turned to the space on the other end. He felt that another 'presence' was getting ready to launch as the long-ranged shots of beams came flying over.

Part 6

(Everyone knows that there was quite the controversy over the Prime Minister's residence being a space station orbiting around the Earth. From a transportation and security viewpoint, this wasn 't really a good choice. However, we are about to advance into the Universal Century.)

It was possible to see that light that exploded through the main screen on the battle monitor, even if it were through the naked eye. The lights let out a sharp glow with the Earth shrouded in night as the backdrop.

"The laser signal from the guest is cut off. Near the "Mock Trojan Horse"."

Flaste, who was seated at the steering seat, looked behind at he reported to Zinnerman. *Just as planned,* Zinnerman gave this expression as he nodded slightly, and the commanded through the microphone. "Alright, Gilboa squad, head forward."

"The "Mock Trojan Horse" isn't going to move fast when its attached to the shuttle. Distract them as much as you can. 20 minutes later, we'll send the signal to retreat."

(Roger that. We'll look forward to the guest's performance.)

With this response, Gilboa, who was right in front of the " Garencieres", let the "Geara Zulu" move and removed the beam launcher and the energy unit from the backpack. It would not be suitable to bring in the power but hard to control beam launcher if he wanted to get close to the enemy ship and distract it, and a standard armament beam rifle would be enough. The other two " Geara Zulus" units followed what Gilboa's unit did as they let go of the beam launchers in their heads. Zinnerman saw these actions and reminded them as a commander, "Don't force yourself there."

"Even if we don't count the Manhunter mobile suits as fighting strength, we can't underestimate the new transformable mobile suits. It seems that the "Gundam" is moving faster than we expected."

The "Unicorn" left the debris of "Laplace' right before the attack started and even covered the "Mock Trojan Horse" directly. *Is this a mere coincidence, or did that pilot detect the attack beforehand?* Gilboa let out a meaningful voice as he said, (It seems like the opponent's that brat with sharp instincts.)

(The brats in our house look like they like him. Shall I try to bring him along with the "Gundam" if I have the chance?)

"Don't be greedy. We can receive the information of the Laplace Program from the Psyco Monitor. Right now, our utmost priority is to save Marida."

Zinnerman recalled Banagher Links' eyes in his mind as he refuted Gilboa's suggestion. Beside him, "The Captain's right. Your steering skills are the best when we're talking about steering

this “Garencieres”. Don’t involve any unnecessary feelings and die off there.” Flaste interrupted, and Gilboa answered with a wry tone, (Understood)

(Gilboa Squad, launching!)

The three “Geara Zulus” lit their thrusters at the same time as they gradually moved on course to the “Mock Trojan Horse”. Zinnerman did not wait for the 3 thruster flares to vanish as he turned his sights to the “Unicorn” marker located. As things stood at this point, the unequipped “Garencieres” could not help out. After the mini mobile suits took back the beam launchers Gilboa squad threw out, what Zinnerman could do was to gain an estimate of the situation of this battle through the main screen. Even so, all the sensors were affected by the Minovsky Particles, so he could only look at the allied machines’ laser signals to guess what was going on afar. There was nothing else that could cause detriment to the mind more easily than this, but they could still detect the movements of the “Unicorn” through the psyco monitor , and this was a solace that was better than nothing.

The information that could be sent from the psyco monitor did not just include the location of the “Unicorn”. Since just now, Zinnerman had been listening to the speech that had been playing through the bridge. The voice of the First Prime Minister of the Federation government could be heard in this speech which started since midnight—and the “Garencieres” could hear every signal the “Unicorn” released through the psyco monitor. The NT-D was not activated, but the psyco monitor could trace the actions of the ‘Unicorn”, and it definitely reacted to this voice.

The transmitting wave used by the monitor could cause the Minovsky Particles to vibrate. Thus, even if it was more than 1000km away, this 'voice' could still be heard clearly. However, it may not be a good thing to hear it, and Flaste commented, " Sounds really grim". Zinnerman did not argue back as he turned his bitter expression at the steering seat.

"It's good that it can tell us the position, but this just sounds annoying no matter how I listen to it. Is it not going to end until the speech is over?"

"There is a reaction from the psyco monitor, so it shows that the Laplace Program is still functioning, but…"

As the answer came, Zinnerman saw the psyco monitor on the main screen. What was indicated on it was the merely an audio data being received, and there were no signs of the Laplace Program releasing any other information. Zinnerman intended to stroke the beard under his chin, but his fingers hit the helmet of his normal suit. He snorted out some air and sat back into the captain seat. He heard of this change of eras speech several times in school and in the news, but he never heard the contents so seriously. "Are we to analyse this audio data?" Flaste asked, "I don't know." And Zinnerman answered as he shook his head slightly, wanting to shake off these words that were full of implications out of his mind .

"We haven't detected the signal of the NT-D being activated. Maybe there is some hidden message once the speech is over—"

"We got a laser signal!" One of the crew reported, covering what Zinnerman was about to say. Flaste immediately sat upright in his chair and asked, "Is it from the "Rewloola"?", while Zinnerman looked over at the back of the crew member's head as he sat on the navigation seat.

"No, that's not it. This signal is…"

The crew member's stammering voice caused Zinnerman to feel a chill up his back. The time at this point was 00.12, and it was earlier than expected by 30 minutes. However, there was no other person who would contact the ship at this moment. Zinnerman left Flaste to respond while he stared at the main screen. In this wide and endless darkness, there was a defiant pressure entering this incomprehensible battlefield—

"So Full Frontal has appeared, huh…"

Part 7

(I feel that there are some differences between Earth and Outer Space that I have to personally experience. Thus I used the authority of the Prime Minister to make this decision. And there is no better stage to change the calendar on the last day of Anno Domini and to start the Universal Century than this space station.)

After firing the wire gun at the scalding hot external armor, the reel was activated. He took note not to let the protruding metal

frame touch the normal suit, and as long as he could climb onto the internal armor that was poking out, the first phase of the plan would be considered a success.

"I really want to say that this is easy…but the rest is up to luck."

Gael muttered to himself as he landed on the deck of the "Nahel Argama". The battle before this created a large broken opening on the catapult deck that was 30m large and more than 5m tall. The frame that was twisted by the burnt armor was not cleaned up, no one bothered to deal with it, and it was a devastating scene akin to the aftermath of a fire. The block Gael climbed was a service route that had the middle exposed amidst this breakage. After walking inside for approximately 10m, he could see an emergency partition wall that was used to separate the inside of the ship from the absolute zero of space.

Everything was going just as Gael predicted. He had a ship layout map obtained from Anaheim Corporation and photos taken by Neo Zeon, and after comparing the two data, he had a rough grasp of the damage situation. Gael got out before the "Eye-Zack" got shot down when he charged right into the anti-air intercepting fire, and he used the portable vernier land mover to climb onto the "Nahel Argama". This action itself would completely rely on timing, and the reason why Gael was willing to execute this reckless plan was because he saw the opening on the catapult deck . It was the easiest path to enter. He forcefully kicked the melted metal frame and let his body lean at the wall. He used his hand to wave aside the black ash that was on the surface and installed the high powered explosives SHMX he had on his waist onto the partition wall. He stuffed this wired ignition device, retreated to

the wall and waited for the most suitable moment to press the ignition switch.

Soon after, there was another trail of beams outside the fault, and the anti-air fire that went quiet suddenly lit up again. Gilboa's squad was starting to create a distraction. Gael leaned his back on the wall, and he saw the crossfire through the helmet visor. The shots grazed past the hull of the ship, rocking it, and Gael used the moment the tremors reached his back to press the ignition switch.

The explosives installed inside the partition wall exploded silently, and there was a hole that was approximately a meter in diameter. The fragments of debris that exploded flew out towards the vacuum, and the air inside the ship rushed out of the wall. The steam that was condensed due to the sudden quick decompression created a layer of mist on the service route. Gael used the metal frame as a pivot and brought his body to the hole before firing the wire gun inside. The reel immediately started to activate, and Gael managed to duck into the hole past the air that was rushing out at him. He let his feet land on the floor and step deep within the service route. The air roared over the helmet, stimulating the eardrums that were already used to the silent space.

The emergency partition steel wall started to activate once it sensed the decrease in pressure, sealing the path. Gael forced himself to keep his eyes open as he continued to kick the wall. The partition wall the descended from the ceiling blocked his sights, and he saw that the gap between the wall and the floor was becoming narrow. *Will I be locked here? Or will I be crushed by the*

wall? Gael used all his strength to kick the wall and curl up—and then, he felt the sound of the partition wall sealing up with his body.

The winds that were surrounding him suddenly stopped, and the wire gun ceased to curl up at this point. Gael opened his eyes that were shut unknowingly and looked around. The gloomy red color of the emergency lights was all around, and the path leading to the middle of the battleship was right in front of him. The partition wall that was closed up was right behind him, and the barometer installed on the arm of the normal suit was pointing at one. *So I succeeded?* Gael heaved a sigh of relief as he opened the helmet visor, deciding to wipe his entire face that was covered with sweat.

There were damages on the partition walls the moment the enemy raid came, and new partition walls sealed the place in response. Most likely, the crew of the ship would think this was caused by the direct hit of the enemies' shots, but they could not have expected for everything to be planned by an intruder. Gael experienced the tremors of the continued battle with his body as he remembered the map of the ship in his mind. He then kicked the floor and moved towards the nearest locker room.

If he were slow, he would end up meeting the emergency response team, and this would be bad for him, especially as he was still wearing a Neo Zeon pilot suit. Gael did not bother himself too much with the alerts that rang through the corridors and switched the wireless radio to the frequency Federation ships used. During

battle, the wireless communicator inside the ship would be kept opened, and if he could receive these signals, he could get a rough grasp of the situation.

(Focus your fire on top! If the enemy's in low orbit, they can't turn back easily. You can definitely hit them if you aim carefully!)

(The connected shuttle is getting in our ship's way! The 17th to 21st Close-In Weapons System can't be used. Can't we think of anything here!?)

("Klimt" calling the "Nahel Argama". We can't re-enter the atmosphere like this! Our ship will delay launch. We hope for the crew and the guests to evacuate inside the ship.)

("Klimt", our ship will allow your crew to evacuate into the ship. We might have to abandon your ship based on the situation. Please hurry with your retreat)

To the soldiers who lived in the Minovsky era, it was their job to determine which were necessary information amongst the dialogues that were exchanged through the wireless communicator. It seemed that the guests that boarded the "Klimt" once would head back inside the "Nahel Argama". It would take him 5 minutes to put on a Federation normal suit, and it would take another 5 minutes for him to head to the connector shaft with the "Klimt". He promised with Zinnerman 20 minutes grace, and he was planning whether he could catch at least one of Martha's subordinates and bring that prisoner called Marida Cruz back. Having checked that 3 minutes passed on the watch, Gael flew through the maze-complicated large passageways as if he was

gliding. (WHAT'S THE "GUNDAM" DOING!? HURRY UP AND TELL IT TO FIGHT IF IT'S LAUNCHED!) A certain person's growl echoed through the wireless communicator, and Gael felt that his body that was rushing under zero gravity became even heavier.

Part 8

(Today, there are more than 100 representatives from different countries in the Earth Federation. After some discussion, we shall sign the charter of the Universal Century. This Charter shall be known as the Laplace Charter, and it shall act as a contract between Humanity and the World.)

The "Unicorn" drew the barrel out from its back attachments and set the magazine in it. The assisting grip on the side in front extended together with the barrel, and the hyper bazooka was ready to fire.

The "Unicorn" put the beam rifle onto its back, and raised the barrel of the hyper bazooka that was about as tall as itself over the shoulder, ready to fire. The 3 "Geara Zulus" quickly dodged and went right at the "Nahel Argama" at the back. Banagher caught sight of one enemy unit flying over him on the reticule, held his breath and squeezed the trigger. The propulsion gunpowder that was used for firing exploded inside the barrel, and the 380mm shot took this momentum as it came flying out of the nozzle. The heat and wind pressure that was released from the smoke evacuator caused a thick trail of gas to scatter around.

The 380mm shell continued to spin as it flew in a straight line, dragging a trail of thin smoke as it grazed past the accelerating " Geara Zulu". The proximity fuse activated at the same time, causing hundreds of metal balls to fly out from the exploded shell. The large number of balls that were 5mm in diameter scattered out , and the "Geara Zulu" legs took direct damage as it got knocked off course greatly, but it did not take fatal damage. Banagher immediately stepped on the pedal to let the "Unicorn" rise. The beam that came flying in grazed past the "Unicorn"s legs, and the machine gun-like beams came ripping over.

The other two mobile suits caught up to the "Nahel Argama", moving through the intercepting fire as they let loose a rain of beam bullets onto the ship. The enemy units accelerated, got above the ship, and after seeing that they hit, decelerated immediately and pull away from the firing range below them. The increase and decrease in speeds would show the difference in heights, and they were executing a hit and run tactic that could only be executed in low orbit. In contrast, the two "Lotos" that were equipped onto the battleship were tactless. The anti-air machine guns and the 4 Gatling cannons that were equipped on their shoulders respectively fired, but only added some empty lights amidst the lines of fire. On the other hand, the two "ReZELs" that were protecting the ship from above and below fought back with beam rifles, but even they looked to be having a tough go in this battle that was different from an ordinary space battle. The allied mobile suits movements were not sharp enough as they had to concentrate on maintaining orbital speed. In contrast, the enemy forces that could only snuggle around the mothership continued to fight using an irregular rhythm as they continued to carry out hit

and run attacks. It was because the enemy was overwhelmingly familiar with fighting in low orbit.

The bridge did command the "Unicorn" to return, but in this current situation, it could not do so. Banagher's consciousness was mostly distracted by the speedometer and height meter, but he continued to fire a second hyper bazooka shot. The scattered shots exploded around the enemy unit's head that was lowered greatly, creating sparks in the armor. But that was not enough to cause a fatal hit.

The "Geara Zulu" descended again and accelerated as it fought back with the beam rifle. Banagher dodged as he closed in on the enemy with the 3 hyper bazooka rounds. He determined the attacking route of the enemy, and as he aimed the reticule slightly below the target, "It's disadvantageous for you to attack a moving enemy with a bazooka." Daguza's voice rang in his ears.

"You should use the beam magnum. At this distance…"

"No. That's too powe3rful."

A mere graze from a beam magnum shot can melt a mobile suit's armor into nothing, and even trigger an explosion—even if I don't use this weapon, I can still force the enemy to retreat. "This is not a time to hold back, you know!?" but Banagher ignored Daguza's growl as he let the machine stop immediately.

The machine descended drastically, and the relative distance with the enemy unit was pulled closer. "You'll fall!" Daguza shouted, and Banagher accelerated at a height of 200km and got

around the feet of the "Geara Zulu" that passed by. The 4 thrusters on its back lit up at the same time, and the "Unicorn" rose quickly as it pursued the enemy unit from below.

"If it's a close-ranged battle…!"

Banagher deliberately turned the reticule away and fired the hyper bazooka. The shell grazed past the "Geara Zulu", exploded 2km away, and the metal balls that came flying out rained on the thick green machine. The "Geara Zulu" took more than a hundred metal balls from the front as it lost its balance, and the beam rifle in its right hand dropped off. The beam rifle seemed to have taken damage from the direct hits of the metal balls as it exploded immediately, creating an orange ring of light in space.

With the light of the explosion shining, the "Geara Zulu" shot its balance verniers as it slowly retreated. The generator was not damaged, and it probably would not be dragged down to Earth by gravity. After confirming this, Banagher scanned around to look for the other two mobile suits. At this moment, Daguza gave a deep voice from behind as he said, "You deliberately missed that, didn't you…"

"If we force them to retreat, there's no need to kill them, right?"

"They'll end up being reclaimed by the mothership if you do that, and they'll become enemies with us again."

"I'll just force them to retreat again when that time comes."

Banagher said without looking at the other person. “Do you think this is a game, you bastard!?” the angry growl rang through Banagher’s ears, and his body that was grabbed on the shoulder was held down onto the linear seat. Banagher bit his lips, unwilling to meet Daguza in the eyes.

“I don’t want to repeat what that man just said, but you should take the enemy down when you go. The enemies you let go may end up being the ones killing our allies, or even you.”

The shoulder that was grabbed by the other man cooled off, and the clever reality spread through Banagher’s body. If he admitted this, he would be swallowed by the machine, and would become a living core of negative emotions ready to explosive. He thought about the thoroughly injured Marida, and the certain person whose name he did not know that got shot and killed by a stray shot—and had enough of this. “SINCE WHEN AM I PLAYING HERE!?” he squeezed out this voice from his abdomen and waved away Daguza’s hand on his shoulder.

“WHETHER IT’S MY DEATH, OR THE DEATH OF OTHERS, I CAN’T JUST JOKE AROUND HERE. THAT’S WHY I’M TRYING MY BEST HERE, ALRIGHT!?”

Daguza met Banagher’s stare right in the eyes, and he showed a wavering expression as his eyelids shivered. Banagher finished and looked away, only to hear an approaching alarm of an unknown clinging tightly onto his heart.

The motion sensor indicated that there was an enemy approaching from above, on the right side. The relative distance was less than 20km, and it was too late to dodge it. Banagher let the "Unicorn" draw its beam saber and got ready to take on the enemy mobile suit that was approaching rapidly. He caught sight of the enemy that was a little dot, and this enemy soon became the size of a fist. The "Geara Zulu" that was wielding the beam rifle then covered Banagher's sights.

The beam hook that was shaped in a light sickle swung down, and the beam saber took this hit as bright sparks were emitted. As the high-heat particles cackled, Banagher saw the antenna of the enemy unit that had a feather-like decoration, (Can you hear me, Banagher?) this voice caused him to widen his eyes in shock.

(Fall back. I have no intention of fighting with you here.)

"Mr Gilboa…!?)

The savage looking face of the "Geara Zulu" that was lighting its monoeye overlapped with the dark-skinned face Banagher faced on "Palau", and the fingertip pressing onto the button of the beam saber was shuddering. As Daguza gasped beside him, (We won't sink the ship. Retreat back before things end!) Gilboa continued.

(Our aim is to bring Marida back. The "Garencieres" is nearby for this."

"But that…what do you intend to do!?"

(Everything's set.) The "Geara Zulu" continued to clash with the "Unicorn" at close range as it turned its monoeye around to check if there were anyone else on board, before finally looking back at Banagher. (Listen, you must retreat. Tikva will be sad if you die.)

After saying that quickly, the "Geara Zulu" pulled back the vibrating beam hook away from the "Unicorn". "Wait, Mr Gilboa …!" Banagher shouted, but the other person did not respond, as what was left in Banagher's sights was the back of Gilboa's unit that lit its verniers as it left. The "Nahel Argama" continued to let out intercepting fire as it appeared in front of the unit that merged into space. Banagher did not have time to think too much as he stepped on the pedal, hurrying the "Unicorn" to where the other person was.

"Did he say that they set everything up…?"

Daguza mused amidst the accelerating G-force, but at this point , Banagher did not have the need to meet the passenger behind him in the eyes as he was thinking the same thing as what Daguza was thinking. The enemy unit that struggled to attack the "Nahel Argama" let itself get shot into pieces deliberately, and a certain perpetrator used that opening to sneak inside the ship. "RX-0 calling Romeo 010, please transfer the channel to the "Nahel Argama"." Banagher heard Daguza speak into the wireless communicator, and he let the "Unicorn" maintain an acceleration that was barely enough to leave the course as it charged right at the "Nahel Argama".

(There might be an intrusion inside the ship. The guess is that the enemy is aiming to recapture the prisoner. Strengthen security immediately, and if necessary, patrol around. Over."

At this distance, it would be more reliable to ask an allied machine to send the machine as the message would be more likely to reach the receiver. The "ReZEL" that was below the "Nahel Argama" let out a signal flare, indicating that it understood, and closed in on the distance with the ship. Banagher saw this and felt somewhat relaxed as he turned to look at the "Nahel Argama". He saw the space shuttle that was connected to the portside, confirmed that Marida was still within the ship, and suddenly had a doubt, wondering what exactly he was doing at this point.

If Zinnerman and the rest were here, it would be much better to hand Marida over to them. This was an obvious fact that did not require thinking, and it was because Gilboa believed that Banagher would have this similar understanding that he spoke of the plan for this operation. Even so, Banagher forgot about this untila moment, and he, who detected that the enemy had entered the ship, kept thinking of warning his allies to respond.

Enemies and allies—no, this kind of classification was not suitable for him. He know both sides personally, and no matter which side it was, he would help out the moment he saw someone in danger. In the end, Banagher was an observer who did not belong to either side, and could not help either side. He was so timid that he did not want to hurt others and himself, pretending

to be kind, but would only add fuel to the battlefield. He was always pretending to be a victim, but killed others with random shots.

This won't do. It'll only cause the situation to get more confusing. I won't be able to save myself, let alone others, so what shall I do? Banagher could not think properly as he had all sorts of thoughts, and strength was seeping from his hands that were holding the control sticks. He shook his head and looked in front. On that side, where the fires continued to flare, Captain Otto and Lieutenant Commander Conroy were still fighting; Ensign Mihiro and Gilboa were still fighting, and even Takuya and Micott were probably fighting with fear.

Then, what about me—? As Banagher stared at the lights that were crossed in front of him, he repeated his self-questioning mindlessly, only to see the "ReZEL" approaching the "Nahel Argama" get shot down and explode.

The fireball that engulfed the blue machine immediately expanded, and the static and electronic interference noise entered the ears. Banagher let the "Unicorn" accelerate and rise. He could tell at a thick beam of a long distance cannon snipe grazed past his feet, and the beam scattered as if it was trying to light Earth that was shrouded in night.

"A new mobile suit…!?"

Daguza muttered. Looking at the direction and power, it was not a beam that was shot by Gilboa and his men. Banagher looked over at the front of the "Nahel Argama" where the beam came

flying from, and he sensed a certain pressure his body recognized closing in from there. The new enemy came entering from the equatorial orbit in a completely opposite direction from his, approaching at an alarming speed. That oppressiveness became a wind pressure that felt like it would rip the scalp off, and at this point, a term passed through his chest like a beam of light.

The Red Comet—!

Part 9

(This is based on the agreement from everyone in the Earth Federation government, and no mention of God is in it. We shall not mention Humanity's original sin. After this, we are to face our final judgment, and then we shall break the deadlock in our hearts. Our destiny will be in our hands.)

"If God really exists, I can offer a kiss there…!!"

The ecstasy of exhilaration rose up his body as he squeezed the trigger. The beam launcher let out mega particles beams, and the pink lights grazed past the "Mock Wooden Horse" as it reached beyond. If the information sent over from the "Garencieres" psyco monitor was correct, that person should be inside. Angelo got ready to meet the "Unicorn" as he gripped onto the ball-shaped control stick tightly. He could no longer see the explosions that were on the path of the beams, nor could he see the movements of the other enemy units. He was only trying to find the white mobile suit that should be in low orbit.

Diagonally behind him, Lieutenant Cuarón squeezed the trigger too, and the escort squad-customized "Geara Zulu" fired the beam launcher. The bright light flew out straight, illuminating the red armor of the "Sinanju" that was racing in front. The "Sinanju" opened the thruster unit on the back that was like wings, and the way it flew above the layer of atmosphere could only be described as an archangel. Their units had boosters that were twice as large as the units themselves, and it had been more than 9 hours since they launched from the "Rewloola" as they took on the G-force that nearly knocked them out as they raced here. It was definitely this crimson red archangel who managed to guide them through this dangerous course while accelerating, reach the Earth orbit and catch up with the "Unicorn". The exhaustion of the long journey was immediately reset, and Angelo felt his breathe and strength rising up his body as he stared at the other end that had many lines of fire on the other side.

As they were racing along the same orbit, they were moving at a relative speed of 15km per second faster than the "Mock Wooden Horse". The enemy ship would not have the chance to dodge, and naturally, they did not want to leave this chance hanging. There was less than 30 seconds until contact— (Our target is the " Unicorn". Ignore the other units.) Frontal declared, and Angelo naturally accepted it.

(Zinnerman intends to get back Marida, so we'll leave the " Mock Wooden Horse to them). Our aim is to fight the "Unicorn" and prompt it to activate the NT-D.)

"Yes!"

(No need to hold back on him. You won't be able to beat the " Gundam" if you have no intention of fighting with the will to take down an opponent. You have to watch out for the magnum shots, for example.)

There was no need for him to remind them this. "Yes! Please let the escort squad open the way for you!" Angelo answered as he put his finger on the trigger of the completely charged beam launcher.

Angelo did not spend the time sleeping during the past 9 hours of journey. He spent this time trying to use past battle records to get a grasp of the enemy machine's capabilities and the habits of the pilot, and completed a battle simulation to deal with the " Gundam". First, he would have to let the enemy activate the NT-D and draw out the true nature of that person. After exchanging messages with Cuarón's unit, Angelo would then move about 50km away from the "Unicorn" and squeeze the trigger completely. Cuarón's unit would then fire at the same time, and the intersecting beams would form a cross of beam fires.

The two snipes of beams caused the "Unicorn" moving forward to stop the machine and rop in height. Angelo went by the opposing machine as he released grenades. The launcher inside the shield fired away, and the grenades continued to explode. As expected, the "Unicorn" continued to dodge as it was surrounded by beams. Angelo let the thrusters stop completely and let the machine descend several kilometers in height. He waited for the charge alert signal to ring, and immediately squeezed the trigger.

As his sights got pulled by the G-force, the I field was generated as the “Unicorn” leaned on the shield. The approaching alert signal rang, telling Angelo that a rocket was flying over. It was fired by the “Unicorn”, and the physical ammunition that was moving at turtle pace compared to a beam closed in on him and exploded above his head.

“This little…!”

Angelo used the rebounding effect of the atmosphere to leap up and let the machine return back to the same orbit as the “Unicorn”. The “Sinanju” too skilfully dodged the metal balls that exploded and scattered as it fired a beam right back at the enemy. The “ Unicorn” deployed the shield that was radiating an I-field in front of it as it blocked off all the beams that came right at him as it strafed sideways. It seemed like it was prepared for any bazooka shots as it continued to dodge, adjusting its height as it continued to retreat. The enemies were right on its orbit, but it continued to retreat without doing anything.

Looking at the “Unicorn” before, such actions were really unexpected. It was impossible that the enemy used up the ammunition. Even if the bazooka shells were used up, the “ Unicorn” still had a beam rifle slung on its back, and it should have enough time to switch weapons and fire. Angelo fired the beam launcher that was still charging, and the thin beam went by the “Unicorn” as the bazooka shot came firing back. That shot rained diagonally in front of Angelo, and the metal balls scattered like rain. However, it merely caused a little damage to the “Geara Zulu”.

It seemed that the enemy was deliberately aiming the reticule away as he fired, and the mobility was too slow. *Is it because he's worried that he'll be dragged down by Earth's gravity?* Angelo pondered for a while and looked at the "Unicorn" that would only retreat, concluded that this was not so, and gritted his teeth hard.

He could not feel any will to battle from the "Unicorn" up till now. It lacked the usual oppressiveness that would fight back as it continued to scamper around. *Is it not in good battle condition, or is it not intending to fight at all?* "You dare to treat me as an idiot…!" Angelo growled as his fingers on the ball-shaped control stick tensed up inadvertently.

"DO YOU THINK YOU CAN FIGHT WITH THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE ON THE BATTLEFIELD!? HURRY UP AND TRANSFORM INTO THE "GUNDAM"!"

If I can't have a proper fight here, it'll be meaningless to come here. Angelo squeezed the trigger of the beam launcher fully. The " Sinanju" too fired with its beam rifle, and the lone horned mobile suit continued to be exposed under several fires as it swayed its body like it was amidst the wind.

Part 10

((Right now, we have a vast and endless universe in front of us, one that is filled with all sorts of hidden possibilities, an ever-changing future. No matter how you came to be standing on this entrance, you have no need to bring your past into the new world.)

(No doubt about it. It's that red mobile suit. It just flew above us at an amazing speed!)

(The "Gundam" is moving away! Can't we let the cannons at the back support it!?)

(The cannons are having a tough go trying to defend this ship! What is the mobile suit squad doing!?)

The enraged voices could be heard over the ship's wireless communicator, and there was no doubt that Full Frontal had appeared on the battlefield. At that moment, an obstacle formed by a sharp 'presence' rose slightly, and Marida sensed that pressure passing through her back.

Marida darted her eyes side to side as she looked around at the faces of the silent hovering under the ceiling in front of her eyes, surrounding the stretcher. This 'presence' did not come from outside the ship. It was of a different direction from the many ' presences' outside, and there was a more direct and violent omen waiting in front of this passage. Marida turned her body that was held down onto the stretcher, and looked forward from past the helmet visor on a person's head.

After the shuttle launch was delayed, the surrounding men had to return to the central gravity block to evacuate, and none of them was paying attention to Marida. They would sometimes cringe due to the vibration that rocked the ship, and only thought about getting to safety as soon as possible.

Suddenly one of the men met Marida in the eyes. It seemed that Alberto noticed her stare from behind, and he turned his pale face behind at Marida who looked back at him without being able to close her eyes. She saw him blink hard as his face suddenly tensed up. He reminded the subordinates beside him, saying, “Oi, the prisoners’ awake…!” Marida had no time to watch for the moment as she slipped out of the fasteners she loosened beforehand faster than the subordinates who noticed this.

She pulled her right arm out and reached for the belt on her shoulder. She then turned herself around and intended to get off the stretcher. Suddenly, the sound of a tremendous explosion echoed through the passageway.

The men were surprised as they got into position to defend themselves. The white smoke that came from the front surrounded their backs, and at that moment, 2, 3 more similar explosions rang consecutively. The man that was originally beside Alberto was blown back, and the stretcher tilted to one side as there was one man missing on the side, and Marida hurriedly reached her right arm that was the only thing that could move as she saw the wall of the corridor right in front of her to protect herself. An explosion rang again, “Hii…!” and Alberto’s cry echoed through the corridor .

It was the last explosion. The passageway went silent without warning as only the anti-air guns vibrating noises could be heard from far and near. Marida floated together with the stretcher, and she saw blood floating in front of her. There was blood floating amongst the white smoke like amoeba, and it spurted out from the normal suits near the ceiling, drop by drop. They were changing

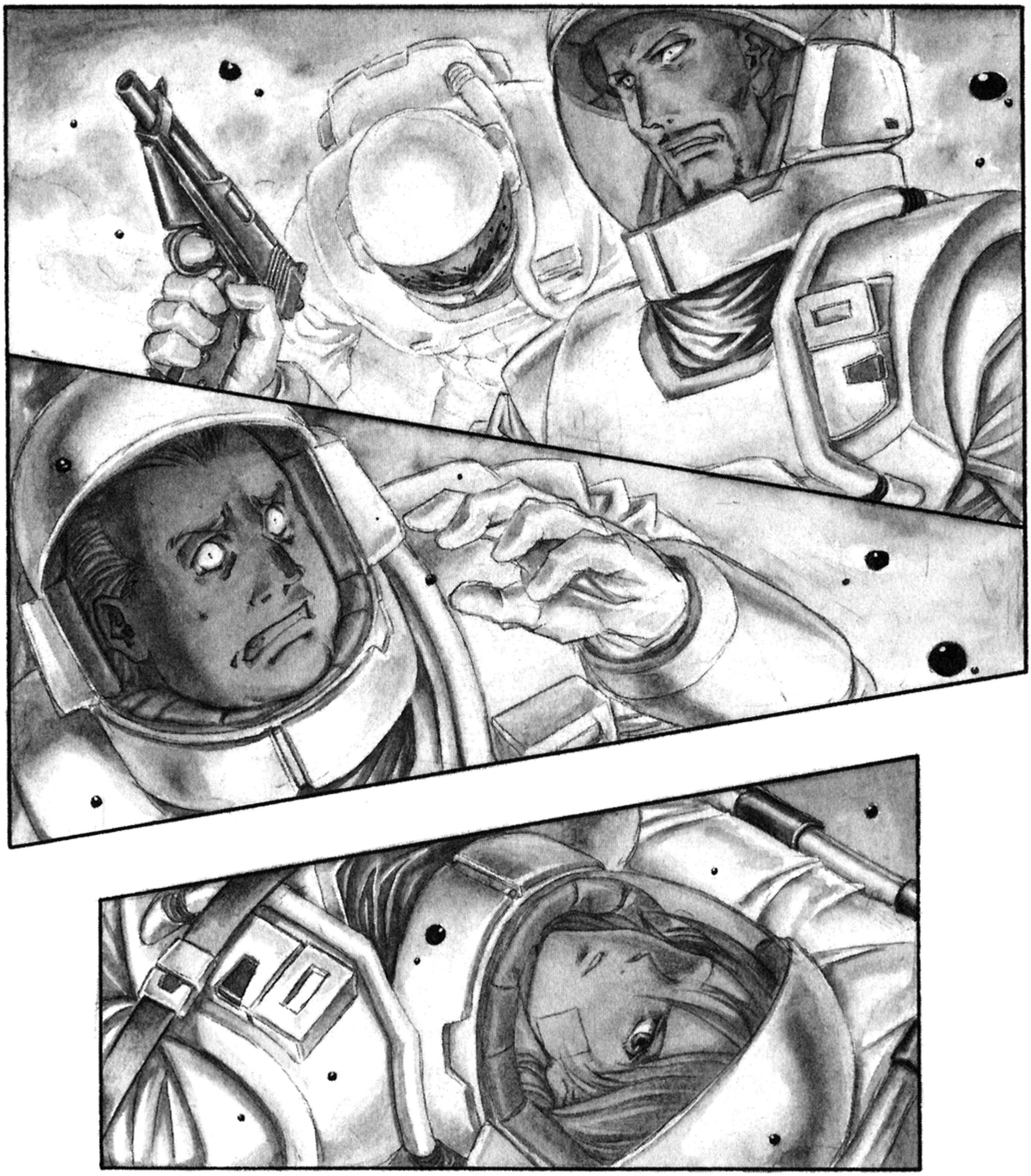
shapes from time to time as they moved over Marida's head. There were also 2 figures in normal suits crossing by each other in front, and they were also shot through the chest. Further in, there was a man wearing a normal suit leaning against the wall as he slumped down on the floor. He was most probably shot through the face as blood came out of his helmet like a blood tank. The arm that drew the pistol was swaying slightly in the air without being able to do anything.

The stinging stench of smoke and blood was mixed together. Marida could not even determine what was going on at that point. She first ensured that her body was free, and then heard the unique sound of a certain person's magnetic soles on the floor, and stopped her hand that was intending to reach for the belt. It was the owner of that 'sharp' presence—that certain intruder who snuck into the ship beforehand and gunned down all the men around him in an instant. He was slowly moving through the smoke as he approached.

An ally? Marida thought that it was impossible as she turned her stare to where the footsteps came from, and as she looked over, there was a scream, "GYAH!" from there. Alberto knocked aside the corpse that was floating in the air as he leaned his back on the wall. His thoroughly pale face was numb, and at this moment, the footsteps stopped. A certain person gasped as he stood not too far behind Marida, who turned her head slightly and looked at the other person from the side of the stretcher.

Like Alberto and the others, that man was wearing a heavily equipped Federation normal suit, and the recoilless handgun in his hands was pointed at Alberto. This man revealed his appearance

from the helmet, but Marida did not know him. His eyes were not looking at her as his fierce looking face was trembling slightly. He opened his mouth a little, and he stared right at Alberto with a shocked and emotional expression. He was completely stunned as he looked like he forgot to remain wary about his surroundings; and Marida too wondered if that man was really the owner of the ' presence' as she looked at him in surprise.



"Master Alberto…why would you…"

The man did not notice Marida looking right back at him as he let out a hoarse voice. Alberto was cuddling his head with his hands and remained curled up as he shivered. Marida moved her hand that stopped at this moment and undid the belt on the stretcher quietly.

"It was you? You're the one who was instructed by Martha to board this ship…?"

Rage had already seeped into the man's face that was wavering to shock, and this emotion caused him to point the handgun in his hand at Alberto's helmet. "ANSWER ME!!" this aggressive roar caused Alberto, who was curled up, to cringe his shoulders.

"As a son of the Vist family, why did you killer Master Cardeas …WHY DID YOU DO SUCH A FOOLISH THING AS TO KILL YOUR REAL FATHER!!?"

Marida stopped her hand that was about to undo the belt on her waist as she pricked her ears to listen to the man's explosion. BOOM. An explosion could be heard from afar, "…I, I had no other choice." and the noise was mixed in with Alberto's voice.

"If we lose the "Laplace Box", the lifeline of the Vist Foundation will be severed. This goes for Anaheim and the other enterprises under it…so I—"

"Even if you say so, heavens forbid that a son kills his father! Master Cardeas has his own considerations, so why, why would the one last person who has the right to stop him…!"

"THAT MAN ONLY CARED ABOUT HIMSELF! HE THOUGHT THAT HE COULD DECIDE EVERYTHING JUST BECAUSE HE'S STRONG! HE THOUGHT THAT PEOPLE WHO WERE WEAKER WERE JUST SLACKING OFF…BUT I'M BEEN WORKING SO HARD…!"

"YOU'RE JUST BEING USED BY MARTHA BECAUSE YOU'RE WEAK! WHY DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT!"

That man forcefully grabbed Alberto under the collar of the helmet and lifted him up. Marida saw that Alberto was a sobbing mess as his saliva and tears were all mixed together from past the shoulders of the man that were trembling with rising anger. "Aunt was very kind…" and she felt goosebumps rising all over her body .

"She was willing to recognize me and accept me. Dad doesn't know about such things."

Marida could not tell whether those eyes that were confessing were crying or laughing. "Such twisted logic…!" the man growled as his shoulder shuddered, and he jammed the gun right at Alberto's throat. Marida anticipated that the other person would squeeze the trigger, and undid the belt on her angles. She kicked herself off the stretcher and slammed herself into the man's back.

There's no reason for me to save. By the time Marida realized this, she had already taken action. There was an unknown impulse screaming inside her heart unconditionally, that this person should not be killed. She used her shoulder to knock into that man and grabbed a handgun beside her. That man took this sneak attack and tumbled, but he still pointed his fingers at Marida's flank and pulled her hand that would not let go of the handgun over to him. The sharp pain exploded in her ribs, and she was unable to breath at that moment as she was dragged in front of the man.

Marida instinctively raised her knee as she intended to aim for the man's crotch. At this moment, "Marida Cruz, I suppose…?" the man spoke to confirm, and Marida's body was tense with shock.

"Good, Zinnerman's waiting for you to return. I'm—"

As he spoke halfway, the man suddenly shut his mouth as he gave a sharp glare to the side. Then, the guns were blazing, and the man's face suddenly disappeared from Marida's sights.

Man was flowing from the side of the man's abdomen, and his body slammed into the wall as it spun around. Marida continued to remain tense as she turned to where the gunshots came from, and saw Alberto seated on the floor, holding a handgun he got from his subordinate's dead body.

He was giving an unusual expression at that man as he exerted more strength into the finger holding onto the trigger. Marida immediately held down his gun and looked over at the man, and the man who was holding onto his flank got up as he looked over

at Marida. He did not look like someone from Neo Zeon—but she did not feel that this man was an enemy based on the fact that he mentioned the name of her master. While Marida was still trying to arrange her thoughts in her mind, "OVER HERE!" "THERE'S A GUNSHOT HERE!" a few voices rang from the other side of the smoke, and the sounds of the bells echoed through the hall.

There were many people with murderous intent charging over, and the man met them in the eyes before he kicked himself off the floor and skipped away from the scene. The side of his normal suit left blood bubbles in the air, and his back profile turned at the corner of the corridor before vanishing. "He's over there!" The shouts and gunshots were mixed together, and Marida saw the sparks of bouncing bullets bounce off the wall and leaned her body to the wall as she crouched down. This would mean lying on Alberto, but she did not have the time to care about this, and Alberto, who was all curled up, did not show any signs of resistance.

Soon, a group of men in normal suits, wielding handguns landed on the floor of the corridor. A few men pursued after the man who turned around the corner, and someone said "Don't let the people inside the ship find out. We have to deal with this ourselves." "HURRY UP AND SHUT OFF THE ALARM!" another man yelled. Marida wanted to lift her head, only to be grabbed by the collar and pressed down on the wall behind her. The hand that reached forward in a flash clamped down on Marida's throat, and the palm of the other hand grabbing her from above the normal suit. Marida wanted to resist, but she could not exert strength. As she struggled to remove the fingers on her throat, someone approached Alberto and said, "Are you alright, Master Alberto?".

Albeto, who was touched on the shoulders, suddenly jerked "DON 'T TOUCH ME!" as he yelled with a change of emphasis.

Alberto pushed aside the subordinate who unwittingly moved back, and managed to stand on his feet by himself. He wiped away the saliva and tears on his face, and the abnormal expression on his face disappeared. He met Marida in the eyes for just a moment, whispered to his subordinate "This woman's alright." and looked away. The hand choking Marida's throat relaxed, and she barely managed to get a breath of air.

"We're heading back to the "Klimt". Call the captain. I want to depart immediately."

He quickly said as he turned his face that was still pale away from the two subordinates. "But the battle outside is still…" the subordinate answered, and Alberto angrily growled back, "I was nearly killed there!" The men's showed their timid backs as they moved amidst the blood that was floating around.

"I don't want to stay inside a ship that has an assassin prowling around. Call all the crew here."

Alberto's widened eyes were showing an abnormal glow at this moment. "Yes…" and the overwhelmed subordinates wanted to leave the scene. Alberto immediately kicked himself off the floor and yelled maniacally, "YOU SHOULD BE PROTECTING ME FIRST BEFORE YOU GO, IDIOTS!!" and this momentum pulled his body into the air. He realized that his back slammed into the dead body of someone who was shot "Hii…", and screeched as he flailed his limbs frantically, wanting to leave the scene. The

subordinates pulled his frantic body away from the corpses and brought him away from the scene, while Marida ended up being strapped by another subordinate back onto the stretcher.

Marida had no idea if it was because she tried too much when she took action as the sharp pain on her flank did not subside. The throbbing pain continued to spread with time, and a sense of fatigue engulfed her body as she was unable to breathe freely. The growls of the crew could still be heard through the wireless communicator, but the men wielding handguns in one hand did not say anything, and Alberto, who was surrounded by them, did not want to look at anyone as his lips were just flapping and muttering. One could even hear him murmur, "It's nothing bad, I didn't do anything bad…", and as the subordinates were wondering if their master was still normal, he ignored their stares as continued to murmur on like a curse. This caused Marida, who had no strength to resist, to feel goosebumps as she was taken away on the stretcher.

Alberto's lost eyes that stopped seeing everything else in the outer world were gradually entering her mind. Marida took a short glance at his eyes, and she immediately had a vague understanding of what she was thinking when she wanted to save Alberto. The moment she heard of Alberto's family background from the assassin, she could not bring herself to leave this man to her death. Just like how Banagher understood Marida, Marida too understood Banagher, and she knew about his birth, his upbringing, and the burden he shouldered. It was because, after that moment of 'resonance' between their minds, Marida probably had a better understanding of him than he himself.

This was the other life that originated from the same source, and the color in Alberto's eyes were so similar to Banagher's that they felt sad…

Part 11

(We are now starting at the beginning, and there is no need to be troubled about other people writing the scripts in your life. Just use the God in you to look clearly at the future that is about to begin.)

The extremely hot particles let out a flash, and this impact-like sound that could melt metal rocked the cockpit Banagher was in. The hyper bazooka barrel was sliced in half as it floated it, and as the machine leaned backwards, the "Sinanju" kicked it in the flank the moment the crossed.

The impact of 25 tonnes, coupled with the relative velocity, was enough to crush a human body as it rocked the entire cockpit. The linear seat continued to shake nosily, and Banagher, who was on it, turned on the throttle to the maximum as he then stepped on the foot pedal with force. The recoil from the impact before caused the "Unicorn" to leave its original trajectory, and the machine dropped in height, causing Banagher to hurriedly light all the thrusters. The "Sinanju" continued to maintain its height skilfully as it continued to fire its beam rifle at the "Unicorn" that barely managed to prevent itself from falling.

"Hurry up and fight back! Aim properly!"

"I'm aiming!"

Banagher growled back at Daguza as he abandoned the severed hyper bazooka to ready his beam rifle. The reticule overlapped over the red machine, and the lock-on alarm pierced his ears. The source of Banagher's stress at this point was the Red Comet, the masked man who was called the "Second Coming of Char"—and Banagher visualized the scar between his eyebrows and the piercing stare. He sensed that his fingers on the trigger were so tense that they could not bend properly. At the same time, the mega particles came flying out of the "Sinanju"s beam rifle, and the "Unicorn" managed to dodge right at the last moment before squeezing the trigger a moment later. The depleted magnum cartridge was ejected, forming a column of high energy that flew out in a straight line, lighting the "Sinanju"s frame.

As the particles flew by, the purple "Geara Zulu" darted between them as it continued to fire its beam launcher. *I should be able to graze it at least.* Banagher gritted his teeth as he endured these words that accumulated in his mouth, and let the "Unicorn" fly away from the beam that flew above his head. He continued to search for the "Sinanju" that disappeared from the monitor while trying to break through the perimeter net the three enemy units set up. Once he sensed that he could not shake them off, he heard Daguza growl, "Firing to scare the Red Comet isn't going to work here!" as it went through his body.

"Hurry up and fight seriously. The NT-D should be able to activate if you face that guy. You'll be toyed till death if this keeps up."

"Bu…but…!" The anti-G capabilities on the assistance seat aren't complete. If I let the machine move at full power, Mr Daguza, you…"

Won't be able to hang on. Banagher said what he wanted to say deep inside his heart and said to his trembling body that he was just lying. He opened the helmet visor, wiped off his sweat, and checked his current location with relation to the "Nahel Argama". As he had been escaping wildly, the "Unicorn" changed trajectories many times, and at this point, he could not see the white mothership within the sensor. The "Nahel Argama" was moving away every second, and the "Unicorn" was moving into the axis orbit. No matter how Banagher tried to shake them off, Frontal's squad continued to pursue, and it was a given fact that the "Unicorn" was the only target.

I'll be killed if I don't fight back— he knew this, but his body just would not listen. The fingers on the trigger were extremely tense, and Banagher felt that he was trying to dodge instinctively. That was because fighting was scary, and Banagher admitted this. He was scared about the transformation into the "Gundam", that he would be devoured by the machine, and that he would become the core of the NT-D or whatever system it was. Logically, he knew that these were not as severe as death…no, he might be getting the wrong idea in the first place. The objective of Frontal and his men were probably wear down their forces before capturing this machine. If that were the case, should he just let them do as they please? This machine was meant to be in Neo Zeon's hands. If he did not resist randomly and hand the machine to them—

"In that case, let me off and bring me back later."

Daguza stopped Banagher from running away further with a fierce voice and showed a piercing stare. Banagher again held onto the control stick tightly with his hand that was not exerting strength.

"Those guys are probably aiming to wear out our side and capture this machine. But what will happen to the "Nahel Argama " once the "Unicorn" is gone?"

"…I understand."

"Those guys are experts of war. They will not let go of prisoners easily or let go of enemies they can shoot down. Don't forget, your friends are still on the ship—"

"I KNOW THAT! I know everything…!"

The faces and names of many people, including Takuya, Micott, Marida, Gilboa, Frontal, Audrey and Riddhe were all swirling in Banagher's mind, and he felt uncomfortable and queasy. He stepped on the foot pedal and let the "Unicorn" accelerate.

He lit the thrusters and turned his back on the beams that were pursuing him as he did not bother to check the location of the machine and glided around on the orbit at midnight. "Banagher…! " Banagher covered his ears and ignored Daguza's call as he merely thought about letting the "Unicorn" race forward. He was still very frightened, extremely frightened. He felt a burning sensation when he received this machine from Cardeas, and when he fought to protect Audrey, but at this point, he could not feel

anything. The icy cold emptiness continued to swirl in Banagher's abdomen, and he knew that the tinge of warmth that was left within him was about to be taken away. That was good—no, perfect for him. That burning sensation had the tendency to make him act violently, and it would cause him to hurt and kill without realizing, and cause him to bear a lifetime of guilt as a dishonest bystander…

The approaching alarm rang, and Banagher's senses suddenly reacted, causing the machine to decelerate. He widened his eyes and saw the debris of "Laplace" approaching from the front on the enlarged window.

The curved frame was shown amidst space, and its whale-corpse like debris continued to be exposed on the orbit over the two axes. Its loose structure was not considered to be a cover, but Banagher did not care about this at all. He needed something to act as a cover, and he wanted to catch his breath without anyone seeing. The Intention Automatic System seemed like it may had detected this fear as it slowed the machine down on its own. The " Unicorn" viewed the "Laplace" debris as a lifeline as it reached its arm forward. It lit its verniers and ducked into the dim opening before stopping weakly. The shield that was deploying the I-field shut off at this point, and the dual-eye sensors that glowed under the facemask gradually lost its glow.

The voice of the speech that showed no signs of ending overlapped with the approaching alert alarm. Frontal's forces were approaching—but Banagher would not lift his head. His shoulders were rising and falling, and he was panting as if he just sprinted along with the mobile suit. *I'm useless, I'm really useless.* His panting

seemed like it was going to mix in with his whimpers, and he gritted his teeth, but he still could not control his sobbing, and Daguza silently called out, “Banagher” at this moment.

“I’m getting off. Open the cockpit.

As per usual, is commanding tone did not allow for any suggestions. Eh? Banagher turned his head, but Daguza did not care as he suddenly reached for the display board and pressed the switch of the cockpit hatch.

The sound of airflow struck the helmet, and very soon, it could not be seen. The all-view monitor in front was switched off, and the part that was the size of the hatch slid out. Soon, the debris that was shrouded in darkness appeared in front of them. Daguza let his tall and large body leave the assistance seat slowly as he floated out to the hatch, and beside him, Banagher saw him move, “At this time? Are you serious!?” and he shouted as he grabbed the other man’s elbow. Daguza silently got in front of Banagher and let his helmet stick over to the other party’s helmet.

“You should be able to fight seriously now. Hurry up and transform it into the “Gundam”.”

The vibration of the voice passed through the helmets, and it involved more human contact than the wireless communicator. His eyes saw through Banagher’s lies and weaknesses through the visor, “But that…!” and Banagher in term answered.

“It’s not...it’s not like that, it’s not like what you think. I just…”

"Banagher, I saw the moment where the NT-D was about to activate."

Daguza said as he put his hand on Banagher's hand that was placed on his elbow. On hearing these unexpected words, he blinked his teary eyes.

"It was the moment when we made contact with "Laplace", when the speech started to play. It seemed like you didn't notice it, but the NT-D seemed to be reacting to your emotions. It seemed that your heart sensed something when you heard the voice of the "Laplace" ghost."

"My…heart?"

"This machine isn't a killing machine…that's meant to eliminate Zeon. There is another unique trait in the "Unicorn" that is completely different from that of a killing machine. The only thing that can pilot it is probably the pilot's heart, a heart that can understand, gets hurt easily, and can cause fear in others, and also, a heart that's fragile, lack efficiency, and one that should not exist sometimes."

From behind the helmet visors, Daguza's eyes that were giving a knife-like glint were smiling. A slight burning sensation beat within Banagher's heart, and landed at the bottom of his abdomen that became gold. Banagher tried to look into Daguza's eyes, and on a closer look, Daguza's expression was wavering as well. Banagher stared at the eyes that were not different form his, and looked down at where the vibration came from.

"Maybe that is the true identity of the Laplace Program. It controls the NT-D activation conditions, and guides the passenger to the "Box"…your father is really not a fraud after all."

These unexpected words caused Banagher's heart to jump, and he could only look away. "That's…" Daguza stopped Banagher with a wry smile "That's enough. I'll ask you later on regarding this."

"There's no time to talk. Once I go out, retreat into the debris and wait for my signal."

"What do you intend to do?"

"ECOAS has its own way of fighting. I rather do something worthwhile than to be a burden in the cockpit. You should fulfil your responsibility too."

Daguza grabbed Banagher's shoulder and pushed him onto the linear seat gently. "What's my responsibility…?" he asked, and Daguza pointed at his chest, "This place knows well." and said with a steady voice.

"This is a one and only cog that can make decisions on its own. Don't lose it."

After finishing off with this, Daguza moved his helmet away to break off contact. The eyes that had some form of closeness were gradually fading away, and the thick green normal suit that wrapped itself around the tall and large body floated out of the hatch. Banagher was bothered by this cockpit that suddenly felt

wide, and called out through the wireless communicator. "Mr Daguza…!" (Close the hatch! The enemy's nearby!) Daguza attached the land mover onto the life support system on his back as he ordered, left a small trail of jet flares and vanished amongst the vacuum.

The motion sensor indicated that the enemy forces were gradually surrounding "Laplace". Banagher had no choice but to close the hatch, and tried to look for Daguza through the optically-corrected all-view monitor. *It's natural to be scared, it's alright to be scared, to run, but don't do anything foolish that will cause you to betray yourself*'— the words Banagher heard before swirled in his abdomen, his originally cold body started to heat up with a fire-like 'heat' within him, and he sensed this as he put his somewhat tense hands back onto the control stick. *Heart,* this ordinary term throbbed within Banagher's heart as if it wanted to let the 'heat' that was just born spread through the body.

Part 12

(Right now, it is 23:59 Greenwich Mean Time. I ask that everyone who is watching this telecast, if possible, please pray silently with me for one moment. Think about Anno Domini, which will soon pass, think about the history of Humanity that everyone made, and offer your blessings.)

He had an idea of where to go and what to do before he left the cockpit. The voice of the speech continued to disturb the wireless communication, and he knew that his communication link with

the “Unicorn” was still not severed. He first climbed onto the curved frame, had a rough look around the inside of the hollow, and then pulled out the SHMX explosive device in his portable armor pouch.

The other equipment Daguza had included a very fine 100m detonating cable, two flashbang grenades for zero gravity use and a recoilless automatic handgun. Excluding the emergency first aid, the strobe lights were the only things that were of decent use at this point, and if he had known that things would have developed to such an extent, he would definitely bring along a field equipment kit. He continued to protect his left arm that was still hurting from the wound, and he looked over at the bottom of the pillars that were intercrossed. Daguza put the a small suitable amount of the 3-phase explosive according to the usage requirements of the SHMX, 0.2 times the size of the opening. He then inserted the plug at the base of the pillar, pulled the detonation cable through the hole, climbed onto the inner wall on the other side, put one end of the cable on the rotating pipe cable, and installed a new SHMX under the fractured frame of the inner wall.

There was not much time left. The enemy forces were surrounding the relic, wary of any traps as they timed the moment to enter. The first one to enter would most probably be the “ Sinanju”, and that red mobile suit not only had a motive, but had a selfish avarice to witness and take action personally, or it would be unable to relax. Even if the “Unicorn” activated its NT-D, the chances of the “Unicorn” would only have a 50% chance of surviving. Looking at the current situation, Banagher would be forced into despair and get crushed by the enemy, so he had to use

this opportunity to buy any chance for the "Unicorn" to survive. He silently moved around the holes and let the detonation cable pass through the 40m diameter ring.

The sense of responsibility over making use of a child, and the soldier instinct within him caused him to understand that he should sacrifice himself—neither of these were the reason why he did this. In terms of risk and effectiveness, he understood that this was not a worthwhile action. *Why sacrifice so much for that kid?* Conroy would definitely laugh at him for this. *However that boy was the one who caused to me to act according to my thoughts.* Daguza apologized to Conroy in his heart, felt that this was the time to do this, and moved his sight to the very cooling vacuum.

As an adult, Daguza bore the burden of the thing called reality up till this point. He wanted to hand his life to a child, a child who would think about the future. Of course, he did not think that he could wash away all his guilt after all the atrocity he did, but he felt surprisingly happy that he could do this. He, who only knew how to act on priorities to fulfil his duties, was leaving everything to a young life that had no blood relations or bonds with him, and even felt a sense of meaning amongst the term future. This heart of his that accepted all foolish thoughts was what he regretted over.

Perhaps this is how someone with the heart of a child would work. He made lots of concessions in life like choosing to become a machine that would only focus on executing its mission thoroughly. He was unable to say any words of encouragement to the wife he left, and if he had a child, his life would probably turn in a different direction. *So this is what it means to have another possibility, another future we should have, that we should look at the*

future with the inner god. Daguza abruptly realized as he heard this speech that sounded like it was ending.

Hope or despair, everything depends on the attitude. The fact that I walked into a narrow road before the many shackles on me is just one of those everchanging patterns— Daguza gave a wry smile at this overly simplistic logic as he moved himself behind the pillar, having finished his assignment.

The "Unicorn" had already moved deep within the debris, waiting for Daguza to give the signal. If he could, he wanted to make contact with Conroy, but this wish could not be fulfilled amongst the vast sea of Minovsky particles. He looked up at the lighting glass above him and let the clear starry light shine on his face. *Bring it on,* he called out to the enemies waiting outside in space.

I'm alone. I'm not a machine, not a broken soldier looking for a place to die. It may be inefficient, a foolish thing to give my life blindly to a single person. Teach my body what kind of power of humanity has when it is released from its restrains— Daguza put his finger on the detonation switch, and he could see the thruster lights cutting through from the lighting glasss. The lights of the monoeyes flashed, and the human within this machine held its breath slightly.

Part 13

(I hope that the journey of all humanity into outer space shall be stable. I hope that the Universal Century is the age where results succeed. And I believe that, lying dormant in our hearts, the God called possibilities—)

The long speech ended up, and a blank descended upon them. All of a sudden, the darkness that was twisted with the hollow was blown aside by the vernier lights, informing Banagher that there was an enemy unit inside the relics.

"They're here…!"

The red shadow was reflected off the broken glass, shining its monoeye as it looked over at Banagher. (Use the Vulcan!) Daguza's voice rang through the wireless communicator, and Banagher gripped the control stick.

(Just scare him off. Shoot!)

Banagher did not have too much time to think. He instinctively moved his fingers, and the 60mm Vulcan cannons of the "Unicorn " let out a fire. The two lines of fire shattered the light retaining windows, shattering the profile of the "Sinanju" on it. The fragments continued to fly within the hollow, and the "Sinanju" raised the barrel of its beam rifle at the "Unicorn" as its feet landed on the inner wall, and the light shining through the windows lit it.

An explosion of fireball expanded from inside the hole, and the pillars that were starting to crack collapsed on the "Sinanju". *Did Daguza set them up?* Banagher saw the "Sinanju" get crushed by a large pillar, and the knee that was kneeling down on the inner wall got caught in another explosion. The circulatory pipes that were buried deep inside the relic let out pressure, becoming shrapnel that rained down on the "Sinanju", and one even pierced through the monoeye on its head. This fragment broke through the

transparent plastic visor with the power of a cannon, destroying the main camera, and the scene of the red giant losing its sight appeared in Banagher's eyes.

Despite losing the main camera, the sub cameras could help the machine carry out optical identification. The pilot would not lose his sight because of this. However, the psychological damage from being stabbed in the eyes would not mutter. (What!?) Frontal exclaimed, and Banagher could hear it from the wireless communicator.(NOW!) Daguza's voice echoed through the place.

(HURRY UP AND USE THIS BEAM SABER…!)

Daguza yelled as his profile in the normal suit came rushing out from the back of the pillar. He threw a grenade, and the flash exploded from the waist region of the "Sinanju". The machine's sub cameras could not work at this point, and it was obviously on the brink of toppling over. Banagher immediately reached his hand for the weapons select panel, chose the beam saber and pressed the trigger on his left hand. The "Unicorn" then moved its left hand quickly and opened its palm to wield the beam saber hanging on the right arm rack. After that, a second grenade exploded, and Daguza's body that floated amongst the debris appeared amongst the flash.

(Stop kidding around!)

Frontal's growl could be heard through the wireless communicator, and the "Sinanju" that looked like it had lost its balance swept its beam saber sideways. The burning hot blade came swinging down from above, and the rubble and got in its

way immediately vaporized. Banagher saw this light burn off Daguza's normal suit as well and disappeared. Before he disappeared, Daguza's tall and burly body shrank to the size of a baby, and then vanished into the vacuum without even any bones left. This visual sight was etched in Banagher's eyes.

Daguza vanished. He did not die, he vanished. The man who was still there a moment ago vanished without a trace, without even a sense of emotion or a sentiment being raised—

"YOU BASTAAARRRRRRDDDDDDDDD—!!!"

Banagher's mind went blank, and the hairs on his body were raised up. His scream echoed through the cockpit, and the armor on the machine slid aside like it was expanding as the glow from the psycoframe showed itself to the outside.

The silhouette "Unicorn" that was in the hollow started to expand, and the heat and light was emitted from amongst the gaps as the armor split open. The lone horn broke into two, and the dual-eye sensor opened below the V-shaped antenna. The " Unicorn Gundam" raised its beam rifle without hesitation, and the nozzle immediately shot a large mega-particle block.

A torrent of light spread filled the hollow, and the massive energy, shockwave and scattered residual of particles passed through the wasteland in space. The voice of the 'ghost' could not long be heard, and the debris of "Laplace" that was shrouded in an ominous color let out a dying scream.

Part 14

The light came flying out from the lighting glass that was designed in the shape of a chessboard, and the cosmic dust that accumulated inside was blown outside by an explosion. The outer wall was blown aside by the expansion of the impact inside the hollow, and the chessboard-shaped window was ripped from within as the debris of "Laplace" was devoured by the powerful quake completely.

"What in the…!?"

The machine that wanted to enter the hollow first hurriedly retreated, and they adjusted their heights as they left the scene. Angelo saw that Cuarón's "Geara Zulu" was following behind, and tried to look for the "Sinanju" amongst the dust. He lost contact with Frontal ever since the "Sinanju" entered the hole from the opening on the other side. *Did he use too much force and shoot down the "Unicorn"?* As Angelo wondered, the "Sinanju" escaped from the crumbling debris, and there was another profile that appeared from the dust.

The machine that shattered the lighting glass and was covered with shattered glass raced right above "Laplace". This twin-eyed mobile suit was still dragging a trail of light from the psycoframe, and there was no way he could mistake it.

"So you're finally became the "Gundam…!"

He suppressed the impulse to immediately take aim with the beam launcher as he stepped on the foot pedal. Angelo moved the machine to the upper right side of the "Unicorn Gundam" and

yelled, “Cuarón! As we planned!” Cuarón’s unit immediately fired the beam launcher, and then lit the main thrusters behind. Angelo deliberately chose not to follow the “Unicorn Gundam” that stopped abruptedly and dodged as he fired the beam launcher at the empty space as according to the simulation.

The sparks of the interfering wave appeared on the sublight beam trajectory, and Angelo could see the light of the psycoframe with his naked eye. Due to the effects of the interfering wave, there was a short delay after the “Unicorn Gundam” used its I-field to block the beam. The enemy was fast, but it could only move around headlong directly, and the effects of Earth’s gravity on the low orbit naturally hindered his methods of evasion even more. Angelo sensed that his attacks were showing effects as his senses started to feel excited, “It’s working…!” he said as he raised his lips.

“He’s just a rookie, and the actions are just as what the simulation indicated. Surround him now!”

It’s futile to forcefully pursue an enemy with much better mobility. I just have to grasp the movement habits of the enemy and shoot the beams at the predicted target. From the battle data, that guy is used to dodging by the right side, and this tendency will show itself obediently if it’s caught in low orbit that felt like a realm. It’s easy to catch up and pincer that guy— Angelo coordinated with Cuarón’s machine as he fired a second beam launcher strike at the path of the “Unicorn Gundam”. While he waited for the charge before launching next wave of attack, he would let loose the Strum Faust and let the enemy unit

meet the fireballs while it moved at a fast speed. Cuarón too followed Angelo's action, causing numerous rings of light and beams to cross over on the "Unicorn Gundam" path.

Everything immediately cooled off, and the gas that became blueish-white remained in space, passing through the scars of explosions. The white machine continued to accelerate and brake as it let out the lights of the psycoframe, and the 2 "Geara Zulus" did not stop their hands firing as they gradually closed their perimeter. After an umpteenth beam hit the I-field interference, the "Unicorn Gundam" looked like it tumbled as it slowed down. (I'll go behind him!) Cuarón shouted through the wireless communicator. The relative distance was less than 10km, and the " Gundam" that was in disarray raised is beam rifle to aim as it had no choice left.

"It's okay to smash any part other than the cockpit. Go!"

Angelo shouted, and stopped the charge of his beam launcher as he squeezed the trigger. The 70% charged beam launcher let out a light, and the "Unicorn Gundam" that blocked the attack with its I-field staggered greatly. *This is the end*— Angelo caught sight of Cuarón's unit that encircled the "Gundam" quickly, saw him raise the beam hook high up, and saw an illusion of the beam that gathered in a form of the hook stab into the back rack of the " Gundam". The ejaculation-like sensation immediately rose up his body. *He has no time to look back, so just smash that white machine in the back viciously hard…!*

At that moment, the left arm of the "Unicorn Gundam" moved, and the beam could be seen from the elbow that reached behind.

There was no time to observe clearly. Right at the moment the " Geara Zulu" was about to swing down the beam hook, the "Geara Zulu" was stabbed through in the chest out of a suddenly. There was noise from the wireless, and was that the sound of the cockpit being crushed, or was it the sound of Cuarón's body vaporizing? Angelo could not understand what was going on immediately as he looked at the two machines that were clinging to each other in shock.

"The beam saber…!?"

The beam saber grip activated on its own as it was stored on the rack on the side of the left arm. The "Unicorn Gundam" did not look back, and did not look at the enemy's location as it stabbed the beam particles appearing at its elbow into Cuarón's unit. At this point, it turned its back on the "Geara Zulu" that was paralyzed in its limbs, staring right at Angelo. Its glowing eyes were emulating the red glow of the psycoframe, seemingly mocking him, *You're next.* Before Angelo could even react, the elbow that was stabbed deeply into Cuarón's unit suddenly raised backwards forcefully, and the "Gundam" pulled the beam saber out of the stabbed "Geara Zulu" and raised it over the head.

The white machine spun around, and the "Geara Zulu" was thrown right at over. That machine that lost its functionality was immediately devoured in a scorching ring of light, and Angelo's sight was covered in white. *That guy wasn't forced into a tight corner. We're the ones baited to it slowly and surely.* This understanding came together with the wave of impact, and Angelo could only let his machine react hastily. As the noise got worse due to the

electrowave interference, Frontal's voice was mixed in, (Run for it, Angelo!!)

(That person's not normal now. Hurry up and leave the orbit while you still have propellants!!)

Frontal's voice sounded like it was trembling, and it intensified the fear within Angelo by several times. Angelo accelerated to increase the height and escaped from Cuarón's unit that became gas. The "Unicorn Gundam" put the shield on its back and pulled out beam sabers emitting beam blades from the racks on its arms as it pursued from behind. It sliced aside the gas body that remained there and darted up from the feet of Angelo's unit. This appearance that would be aptly described as a demon closed in on Angelo's unit, and the fear of *being gnawed and devoured* went through Angelo's body.

"You monster…"

He kept trying to aim with the beam launcher, but the impact struck the cockpit this time. Angelo bent over greatly, and saw that the beam launcher that was sliced in 2 flew about his head. He then immediately saw the "Unicorn Gundam" go above him, crossing its hands. The beam sabers that were activated like tonfas were interlaced like a cross, and he saw two blades swing down to both left and right sides. The gradual impact and the noise that filled the all-view monitor, and at that moment, the head of the " Geara Zulu" that was sliced let out sparks, and the monitor that switched to the sub-camera showed the head flying afar.

The “Unicorn Gundam” glared over at the “Geara Zulu” that lost its head, and raised the beam saber that was about to deal a fatal blow. Angelo did not have the time to experience his own death as he stared at the scythe of the red-glowing god of death. At this moment, a vernier flare suddenly appeared in his ears, and a mega particle light went by the “Geara Zulu” right after the glow of the psycoframe backed off, drawing a bright beam of light in what was originally a vacuum. Two, three beams then overlapped it, and Angelo knew that the “Sinanju” was below, giving covering fire.

The “Unicorn Gundam” rolled sideways to dodge the beams that kept coming, and lowered its height in one shot as it charged right at the source of these shots. As its enemy drew the beam sabers and went right at it, the “Sinanju” lit the main thruster on its back as it raced forward. Both sides clashed within a second, and their sabers were locked in on each other. At the next moment, both sides went aside in the direction they were headed. They fired beams at each other, drew an ‘8’ sign and clashed again. Whenever they clashed, the orbital speed for both machines would be negated, and the numerous fragments that were peeled off from the debris of “Lapalce” floated by the feet of the two mobile suits that were gradually falling. Those shrapnel continued to be dragged into the atmosphere, leaving red trails on Earth at night as friction took ever

“CAPTAIN!”

If this kept up, both machines would be dragged down to the landscape by Earth’s gravity. Angelo made a rough check on the

unit's damage, and he lowered his unit's height to cover the " Sinanju". However, he understood that there was no room for him to enter in this battle. The debris of "Laplace" was collapsing from its base as a large amount of shrapnel covered the whereabouts of the two units, making it hard to find them. In this situation, it was impossible for this unit that lost its main camera and beam launcher to interfere.

"CAPTAIN, PLEASE LEAVE THIS PLACE! YOU CAN'T STAY HERE…!"

Frontal, the Red Comet, would be burnt to crisp here. Angelo wanted to reach his hand out to help, but he could not save anything, and he could not do anything—this thought was scarier than death as it crushed Angelo's heart. The headless "Geara Zulu " was unable to move, and below its feet, the numerous falling stars continued to drag red tails as they were gradually swallowed to the bottom of the atmosphere.

Part 15

"We lost the laser signal of the "Sinanju"! We can't tell its position amongst the debris of "Laplace"!"

Flaste's voice echoed through the bridge, and on the main screen in front of him, the debris of "Laplace" could be seen corroding as it continued to fall, and the rubble continued to plunge into the atmosphere like firedust. At this point, the debris of "Laplace" was 170km, and the "Sinanju" was nearby. They

would soon reach the atmosphere approximately 50km later—and nobody would accept the joke of the Red Comet becoming the Red Shooting Star. “Where’s the “Gundam”?” Zinnerman growled.

“The psyco monitor is still functional. We can determine the location of the “Gundam” here.”

“Right, if we can catch up to the “Gundam”, we’ll be able to find the whereabouts of the “Sinanju”. Turn around and change our orbital course. We need to take the two machines in before they get dragged down by gravity.”

There was no other choice. Zinnerman stared at the screen that was giving red hot glows from time to time as he asked Flaste to confirm, “Can we do it?” If they wanted to approach the debris of “Laplace”, they would have to first break free from the current orbital path they were on and navigate two courses down. The “ Garencieres”-class ship was different from the much smaller mobile suits that were nimble, and it was not easy for it to change its course as and when it wanted. Flaste’s fingers skimmed down the touch panel of the console, “It might be a little rough steering the ship, but it’ll work somehow if we use our atmospheric assistance navigation.” and he answered without looking back. “I’ ll leave it to you. Don’t let this ship fall first.” Zinnerman answered as he brought the wireless microphone to his hand.

“Gilboa, has the guest called you yet?”

(No…response. The “Klimt” has already broken away from the “Mock Trojan Horse” and is on course to the atmosphere. If…we…)

The communication conditions were really bad as the laser signals would be interfered by the trails of fire in battle. It would be a waste of time to even click his tongue as Zinnerman looked over at the time counter on the screen. It was 00.28 at this point, way past the moment they agreed to take back the guest, and the counter showed that they were 3 full minutes over the time for battle. Looking at the fact how the "Klimt" broke away from the " Nahel Argama", it seemed that Gael did not reach his original priority as he probably let Martha's subordinate slip away. It was impossible to tell without contact whether Gael managed to meet Marida.

Shall we stay here to bet on a single trace of hope, or do we prioritize saving the mastermind of the "Sleeves"? Zinnerman held onto the microphone, stared at the enlarged image of the "Mock Trojan Horse", "Can't be helped. Abort the current operation." and painfully eked out his words as he ordered.

"From now on, we're going to change the course and support Frontal's forces. Gilboa's squad is to provide direct cover for the " Garencieres"."

(But…!)

"We still have a chance. We definitely mustn't lose the Captain and the key to opening the "Box"."

In that case, you're going to lose someone important to you again— Zinnerman cut off his inner cry and the power of the microphone, and then turned to the window with the psyco monitor. The language of machine was displayed on the monitor, scrolling

down at an alarming rate, and this was vastly different from when the speech of the First Prime Minister was heard. Most probably, the seal of the Laplace Program was unraveled after the NT-D was activated, giving new information.

Suddenly, Zinnerman had an uneasy feeling. The Newtype Destroyer System could remove the limiter of the machine and let the "Unicorn Gundam" gain a death god like power. Frontal once said that once this system was activated, even the pilot would end up possessed by the system and become a processor that would only view psycowaves as antagonistic intent. If that were the case, Banagher Links would—

Part 16

The beam saber suddenly flashed by, and the pillar of the steel frame was melted apart. The pillar that was sliced off by the beam saber passed through the lighting window and gradually landed to the bottom of the atmosphere, but Banagher did not care about this as he only cared about searching for where the "Sinanju" moved after dodging above. His thoughts were clearly agitating the "Unicorn Gundam" movements, and the machine moved faster than the flesh as it pursued the "Sinanju".

The joints that were lubricated by magnetic coating quickly spun around, drawing two beam sabers from the ends of the arms—the tonfa-like swinging speed was too fast for the eyes to catch up, and the "Sinanju" continued to dodge the thrusts from the enemy with bare minimum dodged as it raised the beam sabers in its hands to slice horizontally. The 4 beam sabers clashed with each other, letting out sparks, and the explosive lights lit the

debris of “Laplace” from inside as the two machines were knocked aside to both ends of the debris. Banagher used the hooks on the feet to get his footing on the only stable graound, and the beam rifle that was equipped on the left arm attachment fired.

The last magnum cartridge was ejected, and the beam that was fired passed through the hollow charged right at the “Sinanju”. The shockwaves caused the exterior of the debris to be crushed, and the red machine dodged this beam of light at the critical moment, only to be seen vaguely amidst the torrent of fragments. The large debris speed continued to drop by a notch, and the height meter let out an alarm as Banagher had already entered the danger zone, but he did not care. Banagher kept the beam tonfas, let the machine lean towards the shelter of the debris, and loaded the spare magazine into the rifle in the right hand. *This is the one guy I must take down*—Banagher was prompted by the burning sensation in his stomach as he fired at the “Sinanju” that was hidden behind the debris as well.

The thick and large beam pierced through the debris of “ Laplace”, uprooting the lighting windows. The red machine darted between the glass pieces flying all over the place, let out the thruster lights and left the relic. *Why is it that I just can’t take down this guy?* Banagher pursued the “Sinanju” out of the hollow. The height at this point was 158km, and the “Unicorn Gundam” was approaching the thin layer of atmosphere in space. The machine that was slightly hot squeezed the trigger to fire a second shot, and the sound of the magnum catridge behind ejected could be heard within the cockpit. In the wireless communicator, a familiar voice spoke, (Banagher, stop if you can hear me.)

(If this keeps up, both of us will be dragged down by Earth's gravity. We'll get burnt in the atmosphere.)

I know that. The burning sensation deep within the stomach—the 'heat' that became a core that was out of control as it answered, and his eyes that were in unison with the machine were pursuing the red enemy. *You're not going to fight because it's dangerous!? Are you kidding? You think this is a joke!? YOU'RE THE ONES WHO TOOK ACTION FIRST! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED DAGUZA! IF YOU WANT TO STOP, JUST GO AHEAD AND DIE THEN! JUST DIE WITHOUT A TRACE TOGETHER WITH DAGUZA…!*

The thoughts that could only think about attacking yelled, and the "Unicorn Gundam" fired its 3rd shot. (You just won't listen…!) Frontal retreated back and fired a beam back that pierced through the debris. The I-field on the shield blocked this attack, and Banagher leaped above the head of the "Sinanju". The "Unicorn Gundam" got tumbled by the flood of rubble as its rifle reticle aimed at the red machine from extremely close in. at that moment, he suddenly sensed a heavy presence coming from another direction.

Banagher immediately let the machine flip and pointed the beam rifle at the direction where the pressure came from. The rubble that was shed became shooting stars that were falling onto the atmosphere, and he saw the silhouette of a triangular shaped VITOL ship rushing over. The one name that appeared in his white-hot mind was "Garencieres", and though his fingertips were shivering as he held onto the control stick, he did not know why he was trembling. Making the situation more problematic were the

two “Geara Zulus” beside the “Garenciere”, firing the beam rifle in their hands, firing restraining shots around the “Unicorn Gundam ”. These actions became an unnerving pressure in Banagher’s mind .

The “Sinanju” used this opening Banagher left as he was distracted by the pressure and quickly raised his height. *You dare to come here and get in my way…!* He was driven by this intense and explosive ‘heat’ as he aimed the reticule at the “Garencieres”. At this distance, the beam magnum could take down that ship in one hit. The nerves attached to all parts of the machine determined this , and right when the “Unicorn Gundam” was about to squeeze the trigger, a “Geara Zulu” floated right in front of the “Garencieres”, opening its limbs out wide as it looked like it wanted to block the attack.

(DON’T SHOOT, BANAGHER!)

This familiar voice hit his head directly, *Mr Gilboa?*, and caused him to react as the voice calling out the other person’s name stopped to echoed through the chest. In an instant, the mind that was agitated quickly cooled down. Banagher blinked his eyes that recovered, but it happened right after the “Unicorn Gundam” squeezed the trigger.

The mega-particle that was 4 times as strong as an ordinary beam rifle was released from the gun, and this vortex struck the “ Geara Zulu” directly. The head that had the blade antenna was knocked off, and the limbs that were spread out were blown apart as that “Geara Zulu” was swallowed by the exploding fireball. The large ring of light appeared in front of the “Garenciere”, and the

noise that sounded like a cry rang through the wireless communicator.

"Mr Gilboa…why…"

The hoarse voice came out from Banagher's mouth, and the light in front of him seeped into his skeleton. That was the crew member of the "Garencieres" who was talkative, cheerful, and liked to take care of people, the father of Tikva and the other two children. He died; he vanished just like Commander Daguza—

I killed him. I killed him. I'm the one who killed him. Banagher's thoughts started to unravel, and the burning sensation that was rampaging deep within his abdomen vanished as an icy cold emptiness spread through his body. The nerves that were linked to the machine were being severed line by line, and the senses that were exposed to the outer world were gradually being enclosed in darkness. At the next moment, the other "Geara Zulu" fired its beam rifle at the "Unicorn Gundam", and though there were sparks that pinged off the I-field on the shield, his numb body of flesh made it looked like a flame on the opposite shore. The machine that was deflected by the interference tilted greatly, and the "Unicorn Gundam" crashed backwards into the debris of "Laplace" that was breaking up with cracking sounds, before being completely swallowed by the torrent of rubble in an instant. Banagher's completely saturated mind and soul were sunk into the linear seat, and he did not move a finger as he stared at the debris of "Laplace" that was moving away from him.

The value on the height meter continued to fall, and the alarm kept ringing inside the cockpit. The silhouette of the "Garencieres"

quickly disappeared, and the all-view monitor was filled with shooting stars with red tails. *I'm falling,* Banagher muttered in a corner of his stiff consciousness. The white machine was stained in blood as it continued to be dragged down to the bottom of the gravity well. It was like a broken puppet as its let the flames of purgatory burn its filthy armor as it. Inside this machine was a soul that was swallowed, a body of flesh that committed a sin again, ready to die—

"…Help me."

Mr Daguza, Mr Gilboa, dad; someone save me. Banagher could only let out a mosquito-like plea as he weakly reached his hand into the space. In front of his trembling fingers, the all-view monitor was dyed a burning hot color, and the machine malfunction windows were overlapping over it continuously.

Part 17

"Change our course! Open the ballute, prepare the traction wire . Hurry up and estimate the course. We have to take back the " Unicorn" immediately."

Otto immediately instructed and turned his sights to the enlarged visual displayed ion the main screen. The air heating up due to the compression caused the white frame of the "Unicorn Gundam" to be dyed completely red. At this point, the height was 112km, and it was no longer a height where it could move up on its own power. If they do not do something to save it, that machine would end up burnt to nothing.

The ballute that was installed at the tail of the ship was opened, and the battleship was at its limit as it tried to descend while trying not to be caught in the gravity. One of the "ReZELs" that were protecting the ship was lost in battle, and the other was moderately damaged, and could not enter the Atmosphere. In this case, the "Nahel Argama" had to take action directly and pull up the "Unicorn Gundam" directly. Otto grabbed onto the handrail of captain seat and waited for a voice to repeat his order. However, Liam replied back with a growl-like voice, "We can't do that!"

"It's falling too fast. We really can't catch up like this."

They needed to move the ship from the equatorial orbit to the axes orbit, carry out complicated navigation calculations, find the time needed to establish a rendezvous route with the "Unicorn Gundam", and check the remaining time the "Unicorn Gundam" has left before it burns up in the atmosphere—*Calm down, Liam's stare was telling him this. He looked away from her and suppressed the urge to lash out about what they should do. "There's still the "Klimt"!" Mihiro's voice caused Otto to turn around in shock.*

"The "Klimt" is moving into the atmosphere from the axes orbit to avoid the battle just now. It's current course can rendezvous with it."

Mihiro probably did her own estimates on the "Klimt" course on her own as she quickly reported her conclusions. She sent the results she obtained to the main screen as she turned her wide round eyes to look at Otto. Despite it being a battlefield, the Vist Foundation ship had already disengaged in a half-peremptory manner and started to fall. If they were moving along the axes

orbit, they would be able to meet the “Unicorn Gundam” if they made some adjustmentst to the course. “Tell them to do it!” Otto did not care about anything else as he yelled.

“Yes.” Mihiro answered and turned back to the console, trying to establish contact with the “Klimt”. Soon, all normal communications would be obstructed by the plasma air, and the “ Unicorn Gundam” would not be able to contact the outside were. Otto had no interest in whatever happened to the “Laplace Box”, and he did not care about ensuring the “Unicorn Gundam” was in one piece, but the only thing he insisted on was that he could not allow the pilot inside to die. If he died here, the sacrifices of those who risked their lives to save him in the raid on “Palau” and those who died in battle would become completely meaningless. *Please make it,* his heart muttered as he stared at the “Unicorn Gundam” that got redder on the screen. “That won’t do. Stop it…!” a sharp voice suddenly rang through the bridge, shaking the atmosphere even further.

“You can’t allow the Foundation’s ship to reach the “Unicorn” …”

A tall and large man looked like he eked out this voice as he winced painfully, bending his body down. Otto looked at this man ’s appearance through the helmet of the normal suit, and did not recognize this man’s face. *Is there someone who looks like this amongst the NCOs?* He brought his body out from the captain’s seat and looked carefully at the face of this man that should be 45, 46 years old. “Who are you?” Liam ignored this as she let out an

interrogative shout. The man did not answer as he turned his oily and sweaty face to Otto. He then stepped off the floor as if he was going to fall forward.

The man pushed aside Liam who intended to stop him as he approached the captain's seat. Otto noticed that the man grabbing onto the handrail had his hand dirtied by blood.

"We must use this ship to take back the "Unicorn". Alberto won 't save him…Alberto won't save Banagher Links…"

The man panted as he finished, and used his other hand to hold onto this flank. Blood bubbles were rising from the position the man was holding onto, and Liam, who was intending to suppress the man from behind, grasped. He was wearing a normal suit with the ship's name on it, but this man was not part of the crew. This unknown man however spoke of the name "Unicorn" and Banagher…

"What's going on. Who exactly are you…?"

Part 18

The space shuttled entered Banagher's sights in a horizontal manner, and let out a traction wire from the tail of the ship. This several hundred meters long wire straightened amidst the scorching vacuum, and it looked like a spider web entering hell. It was unknown if it was the Intention Automatic System responding to his senses, and the "Unicorn Gundam" that moved its hands on its own reached for the wire as the red hot machine was dragged behind the shuttle.

("Unicorn", do you copy? Our ship will enter the atmosphere directly. Grab the wire and climb onto the ship. Can you do it?)

The voice of the shuttle's captain entered Banagher's ears as the interaction circuit was opened. Banagher however did not have the strength to answer back as he blankly stared at the one lifeline in front of him. The wire was starting to reel in, and the space shuttle that was covered in the shock cone loomed in on Banagher as it got bigger. The "Unicorn Gundam" tried to leave the burning hot place as it moved on its own, and grabbed onto the wire to move towards this shuttle that reached out to him.

Let your heart decide—Daguza's words suddenly appeared in Banagher's frozen heart, and he turned his slightly loose face up suddenly. *My heart is controlling this guy. I want to live, I want to be saved,* his heart was shouting shamelessly like that, and he even pulled the lifeline to me. He felt despair. This despair was giving him guilt of regret that was driving him to death, but in the end, the instincts of survival still took priority. His heart that was greedily looking for survival was desperately grabbing onto the wire.

How shallow of me, he felt really perplexed. He was the one who killed Gilboa, he was the one who robbed Tikva and the kids of their father. There was no need for him to kill anyone in the first place. *Mr Gilboa merely opened his body wide to protect the "Garencieres", but I fired at him. I fired at that defenseless unit in the midst of my anger. Did the machine do this? Or did my heart do it when it got swallowed by it? Or did the machine do it on command from the heart…?*

Ahh, I don't understand anymore. I don't want to think of anything at all. I just want to rest even if it's for a moment. I can rest if I can let the machine climb onto that shuttle. Once I enter the shockcone, I hide from the burning hot airflow. If I can reach there—

(…nagher. Banagher Links, do you hear me?)

A familiar voice rang out from beneath the noise, and there was a commotion within the wireless communicator inside the helmet. This was not the voice belonging to the shuttle captain. It was not a voice from the communicator. This voice was a call from a distant place. Banagher lifted his head slightly and looked left and right.

(Alberto Vist is on the "Klimt". Listen, you absolutely must not trust him. If you can enter the atmosphere successfully, leave the shuttle as far as you can immediately. You definitely must not listen to his instructions.)

The voice continued on with a painful tone. The system indicated that the voice from the "Nahel Argama", but Banagher remembered that he heard this voice somewhere before. It was the mobile suit pilot who intended to risk his life to attack the ship—this voice came from the man who only cared about finishing his own words. The tone he was speaking in sounded like a father who knew him. However, as Banagher continued to think vaguely, a certain line in those words created a stronger impression. It started to twirl within Banagher's mind, and he cautiously, fearfully reflected on the words that entered his chest.

Alberto Vist…Vist?

(Alberto Vist took action based on the Foundation's instructions . Your father, Cardeas Vist was killed by Alberto. He was fearful that the "Laplace Box" will fall into other people's hands. To prevent that from happen, they'll definitely…")

Bfft. The voice was suddenly cut off, and the wireless communicator was cut off. This interruption was rather abrupt even though they entered a block area where the communication to the outside could not work. Banagher, who felt some light brightening his heart somewhat, reached for the communication panel screen (I had no choice) another voice caused him to stop.

(The Foundation can't live on without the Box. But that man intended to bring the "Box" outside.)

This voice that sounded like it came from the miry swamp caused Banagher to feel goosebumps under the pilot suit. He checked that the voice came from the communication circuit of the shuttle, pricked his ears a little and heard Alberto's voice that sounded rather agitated.

(That man wants to hand the "Box" over to Neo Zeon, to scatter the seeds of new discord and maintain the prosperity of Anaheim and the Foundation…I don't really know the logic behind it. This is really the kind of thinking that man would have. But even if we don't do so, the Foundation can continue to run. Over a long time, we learnt means to control from even through war. We know that whether it's the Federation army or the Neo Zeon army, they're just a cog in the economy.)

It was that man. The way Alberto called Cardeas showed a seemingly endless gloomy tone other people could not know of. Banagher heard Cardeas' voice in the same cockpit—he recalled the moment when he heard Cardeas talking about war merchants through the wireless communicator and arguing with a certain peson. He felt the breath he swallowed feel as heavy as a lead block.

That certain person, that person who killed Cardeas and intended to prevent the "Box" from being leaked was Alberto, the one who gave him an antagonistic intent right from the beginning …Alberto Vist.

(The Foundation has the "Box". As long as this fact doesn't change, it doesn't matter even if the "Box" doesn't exist. The key to opening the "Box" has no reason to exist. As long as we can destroy the "Unicorn", everything will be back to normal. Don't you understand? To a lot of people, you're the seed of disaster.)

This greasy and sticky voice tortured Banagher's eardrums, and an unknown hatred was entering his chest. *Right, I should have known about this,* Banagher suddenly grasped on this understanding that rose up in him. Right from the first time they met, he had a first impression that they met before. Of course, that was to be expected. Banagher saw photos of Alberto's youth before they met.

Deep inside the Vist Foundation, there was a photo that was set up on the grand piano. There was a slightly plump photo standing between a Cardeas who was still relatively young and a woman

who looked like Alberto's mother. The unhappy expression that boy showed looked like it was meant to be displayed to everyone who picked up the photo—

(If you want to hate, hate father. *Hate our father.*)

The voice pierced through Banagher's chest, and then, there was a physical impact that rocked the cockpit. The connected ignition bolt was activated, and the traction wire was severed from the shuttle right from the end.

The shuttle that was originally acting as cover for the "Unicorn Gundam" moved away, and the thin plasma air quickly surrounded the machine. The air rushed upon the machine as if it wanted to break it down, and the "Unicorn Gundam" that was glowing red hot was thrown into the center of the atmosphere, dancing in the storm of hot air like a kite with its string snapped.

Banagher's vision started to spin in a confusing manner, and the plasma air flow continued to blow by the cockpit. The temperature in the machine gradually rose, and the warning alarms continued to sway amidst the burning hot air. *Nobody will save me. There's no worth in saving me. Everything I know about is wrong.* Banagher yelled with a voice that did not make a sound. *I shouldn't be here, I shouldn't be sitting in this, even my birth onto this Earth is wrong—* Banagher' yell was vaporized by the additional heat, and the color of flames gradually covered everything. The "Unicorn Gundam" was surrounded by the burning flames of purgatory, and fell into the depths of a real hell.

Part 19

The ship that was 120m in length blew through the compressed air that was radiating a plasma glow. The atmosphere and intense tremors rocked the "Garencieres" as the bilge covered with insulated material was throbbing, dyeing the main screen on the bridge a bright red. The current height was 90km, and the ship would move through the exosphere and down into the mesosphere where they could not call outside. (I'll let it to you, captain). As the entire bridge was rattling, Frontal's voice entered Zinnerman's ears somewhat.

(Get back the "{Unicorn" no matter what. We'll leave the frontlines on our own…}

The noise interference that got worse overpowered the words after that. "Seriously, saying such selfish things…" Flaste's grumbling voice followed afterwards. The "Garencieres" was originally a ship built to return to Earth, but Gilboa had been the one who controlled the ship whenever they reentered the atmosphere. Flaste could control most of the avionic equipment, but there was a lot of burden to Flaste who had to execute atmospheric entry for the first time. Also, the "Garencieres" had to pick up a fallen object at this time.

Everyone on the bridged lamented that GIlboa was not around, but they understood that this was not a situation where they had the time to mourn for the dead. Zinnerman stared at the "Unicorn Gundam" on the screen that was dyed red hot, and saw that there was a lifeless puppet covered by a shockcone, limp as it fell

through the atmosphere, a silhouette that was basically impossible to distinguish.

The "Klimt" that was moving through the axes orbit suddenly broke away from its original entry path and gradually glided into the mesosphere. That Foundation ship once managed to reach the "Unicorn Gundam" successfully, but it suddenly did the shocking thing of breaking the traction wire. No matter whether that was an accident or intentional, it would not change the fact that the " Unicorn Gundam" would be burnt up in a few minutes. The debris of "Laplace" was completely burnt out as it became numerous bits of rubble that rained down through the atmosphere. Zinnerman glanced aside at that scene as he prompted with a panicked voice, "Can't we speed up any further?" Flaste's hand did not move away from the steering plate, "I'm trying!" as he yelled.

"The functions aren't working well because we forcefully changed paths. If we hurry up, even we will be dragged down by gravity."

"It doesn't matter! Don't think of what happens afterwards. The most important thing now is to bring the "Unicorn Gundam" back on board."

We definitely mustn't mess everything up and put Gilboa's death to waste. "I'm telling you, we won't be able to save ourselves here!" Flaste continued to turn the steering plate as he grumbled meaninglessly and raised the angle of the ship as it entered the atmosphere. The outside of the ship hull started to heat up, and the "Garencieres" continued to accelerate bit by bit. It was still too slow. The current height of the "Unicorn Gundam" was 75km at

this point, and there was a likelihood that the machine that was being charred black would break up before the “Garencieres” could cover the relative distance of 10km. Zinnerman picked up the microphone, and though he knew that this would not reach the ears of the other person, he spoke, ““Gundam”! Banagher Links! Do you hear me!?”

“This is the “Garencieres”. We’re now going to take you back in . Adjust yourself as much as you can and match our relative velocity, or else you’re going to burn out completely before we meet up if this keeps up.”

As both sides could not contact each other here, there was no reason for this signal to reach outside. “It’s not working…?” Zinnerman muttered, and looked away from the wireless communicator that was giving only static. He lost Gilboa, failed in the operation to save Marida, and ended up seeing the key to the “ Box” get crushed. No matter how much he cursed his inaptness, he could not be satisfied. As he looked away from the screen, “That… !” Flaste’s shouted entered Zinnerman’s voice.

Flaste stared at the screen in shock, and at where he was looking, the “Unicorn Gundam” moved its legs, trying to adjust the machine’s posture. It turned itself to where it was falling and stretched its limbs out wide against the air flow. The shield that was put in front of the machine was raised to block the waves of heat. The round-shaped shock cone expanded like it was exploding, and the machine that looked like it revived started to slow itself down.

The air that turned to plasma scattered in front of the shield, and the red hot color of the machine was gradually turning back to its original white color. “Is that an I-field?” Zinnerman ignored Flaste’s question and stared at the machine profile that was gradually approaching the “Garencieres”. *This isn’t a coincidence, that guy used the shield as a rudder to block the airflow and intended to rendezvous with the “Garencieres”. “It’s glowing…” The crew member on the navigation seat muttered. “It’s not the light created from friction, what exactly is it?” Flaste too asked, and Zinnerman heard their words as he looked at the “Unicorn Gundam” on the enlarged visual that was optically corrected. The light that looked like it was glowing from inside the machine to him did not look like it was created from heating.*

Is that the so-called psycoframe glowing on its own? A chilly feeling suddenly entered Zinnerman’s chest as he again picked up the wireless microphone. ? “Oi, Banagher! If you hear me, answer back !!” he shouted, and tilted his ears over to the wireless communicator, only hearing noise. There was still no response. The “Unicorn Gundam” was clearly moving closer to the “ Garencieres”. The psycoframe on the machine was glowing amidst the storm of plasma, and inexplicably, that light remained in everyone’s eyes, not moving away for a long time.

The “Unicorn Gundam” looked it detected the intention as it matched the relative speed of the “Garencieres” before gliding behind neatly behind the ship. It hid inside the shock cone of the “ Garencieres” and brought itself nearer to the bow; once positioned itself above the bridge, the relative velocity between them was completely negated. The head of the “Unicorn Gundam” that resembled a human face peeked through the bridge window, and

the camera outside the ship was capturing a visual of its glowing eyes.

It was an icy cold stare, and those eyes were staring at Zinnerman and company coldly as if it was grading the people inside the ship—

"Is that thing…moving by itself?"

The eyes narrow, and it looked like they were smiling, not because the heat outside the ship caused the air to vibrate. Zinnerman inadvertently gulped, and an impact rocked through the ship and reached the bridge, causing him to be bumped up from the captain's seat.

The hands of the "Unicorn Gundam" touched the upper deck, and the ship felt this weight as it tilted greatly to once side. The alarm rang, and the bow of the "Garencieres" that was lowered increased its rate of descent. Zinnerman did not have time to shout out as his back hit the ceiling, and he tumbled onto the floor. From the corner of his eyes, he saw that the "Gundam" above him was narrowing its eyes in a smile with its back against the plasma glow . The machine with the appearance of a white devil was definitely smiling, and its body was swaying amidst the vortex that swelled like a mirage.

Part 20

Tink. Mineva sensed a certain clear sound ringing in the air, and lifted her head.

It was a shooting star, drawing a short trajectory as it passed through the starry sky. The starry sky in front of her eyes looked like it could be reached, and that shooting stare looked like it fell from there. Its glow caused Mineva to feel an inexplicable sense in her chest. She put her hand on her heart that started pounding out of a sudden, and stared at the bright stars. The panic that was full of premonition lost its shape, and all that resided in her chest was a sense of helplessness.

The wind was blowing, and the branches of the trees in the courtyard swayed with the wind. The sound of the helicopter could be heard from afar along with the wind, but it still did not match the sounds of the insects chirping at night. The presence of the security guards surrounding the place had merged into the darkness, and the Marcenas residence showing its peaceful face to the starry sky. Would the dinner party continue? This cottage felt like it was surrounded by a peacefulness of another world as compared to the dining hall. She looked up at the flora that was rustling due to the night wind, felt a little cold and reached her hand to cover her bare shoulder.

Her hand touched the skin, and she recalled another person's warmth she felt approximately an hour ago, which caused her chest to ache. It was the warmth Riddhe Marcenas spread to her when he suddenly embraced her without warning. After that, Riddhe did not look at her again as he ran away from this cottage. *Why was he crying? What is he doing now?* Such unclear thoughts of doubts entered her mind, *What exactly am I doing?* she asked herself honestly, but could not get a clear answer, and she bit her lips.

Mineva was surprised. She never had such doubts when she snuck onto the "Garencieres" or intruded upon "Industrial 7". She knew very well what she was doing when she left the "Nahel Argama" with Riddhe and decided to come to Earth. And at this point, she suddenly lost her sense of direction. *What was I doing? What efforts are needed to achieve the aims?* Her usual clear thoughts were shrouded in fog, and she could not immediately think of what the next step was. Things got too complicated, and Mineva muttered to herself in her troubled heart. Perhaps it was because she interacted with too many people in such a short time that her values as a human started to complicate, and that she could not deal with things as easily as before. Her decision making ability, decisiveness and will became dull in face of such complication—and this was basically a fragile mental state. Her position did not allow herself to do this.

She put her hand on the handrail of the cottage, and turned her eyes again to the starry sky. She probably did not feel so troubled when that starlight approached her. At that time, her driving force was the heat rising in her, and she could take action before she felt fear or troubled. That burning sensation boiling from within did radiate from the hand of the boy she met on "Industrial 7", a burning sensation resonating within them. However, she could not feel this heat now. The feeling left behind from embrace she felt numbed her body, and it blurred the memory of the touch of that hand. *Is that what you have to do, or what you want to do?* — she answered this question with a firm voice, and came down to Earth.

Banagher, what should I do…? Mineva was standing alone in the cottage, and as she had these words that were stuck within her

heart, she felt like this was not something she would say. She felt the slightly chilly night wind rob her of her body warmth, and looked over at the cluster of stars on the distance of the atmosphere. Another shooting star glided through the night sky with a cold hard trail of light, leaving an instant of light in Mineva' s eyes.